



Jerry Blakeney stands guard with other members of Operation Hero Guard outside a U.S. military recruiting station in Cleburne, Texas. Gun-toting citizens are showing up at military recruiting centers around the country, saying they plan to protect recruiters following last week's killing of four Marines and a sailor in Chattanooga, Tenn.

(Rose Baca/The Dallas Morning News via AP)

After Tennessee Shootings, Armed Citizens Guard Recruiters

ANDREW HUGGINS
Associated Press
COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Gun-toting Americans are showing up at U.S. military recruiting centers around the country, saying they plan to protect recruiters following last week's killing of four Marines and a sailor in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The citizens said they're supporting the recruiters, who by military directive are not armed. Only law enforcement or military police can have weapons

on federal property, which includes recruiting centers. "We're here to serve and protect," Clint Janney said Tuesday, wearing a Taurus 9mm handgun as he stood in a parking lot across from a recruiting center in Columbus. "What the government won't do, we will do." Similar posts have been set up outside recruitment centers in several other cities, including Madison, Wisconsin; Hiram, Georgia; Phoenix; and several sites in Tennessee, including Mur-

freesboro. There's no evidence that such centers are in danger, and the government isn't changing how they're staffed, although some governors have temporarily moved National Guard recruiting centers to armories and several have authorized Guard personnel to carry weapons at state facilities. Janney, 38, who runs his own garage door company, is a member of the Ohio branch of the "3 Percent

Irregulars" militia. He was joined by four other members of the militia. In Ohio and many other U.S. states, it is legal to carry an openly displayed handgun or rifle. The men sat in lawn chairs, occasionally dipping into a cooler for bottles of water, or stood around talking. Some people came by to thank them; others didn't seem aware of their presence. Franklin County Sheriff Zach Scott said as long as the owner of the plaza didn't

ask them to leave, the men were not violating any laws. Employees of a medical supply center next door to the recruiting center said they understood the volunteers' intentions but weren't thrilled about their presence. Customers thought professional security guards would be better. "They could just go crazy with the shooting. You just don't know their state of mind," said Kimm McLaughlin, 44.

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Obama and Kenya: 1st trip to father's homeland as president



A man walks away after leaning his bicycle against a mural of President Barack Obama, created by the Kenyan graffiti artist Banksy, at the GoDown Arts Centre in Nairobi, Kenya Wednesday, July 22, 2015. In his first trip to Kenya since he was a U.S. senator in 2006, Obama is scheduled to arrive in Kenya on Friday, the first stop on his two-nation African tour in which he will also visit Ethiopia.

JULIE PACE

AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP)—When Barack Obama visited Kenya for the first time nearly 30 years ago, he was astonished that an airport worker recognized his last name.

It was a striking experience for a young man — and future American president — struggling to understand how a country he had never seen and a Kenyan family he barely knew had shaped his identity.

"My name belonged and so I belonged, drawn into a web of relationships, alliances, and grudges I

did not yet understand," Obama wrote in his memoir, "Dreams From My Father," about the airport encounter.

This week, Obama will make his first visit to Kenya as U.S. president, a trip that will bear little resemblance to the 1988 one, when he arrived aboard a commercial flight and his luggage got lost. Now, Air Force One will take Obama to a country where children, roads and schools now bear his name, and the world leader is seen as a local son.

Yet traveling with the trappings of the presidency appears likely to diminish the fulfillment of a trip to his fa-

(AP Photo/Ben Curtis)

ther's homeland. "I'll be honest with you, visiting Kenya as a private citizen is probably more meaningful to me than visiting as president because I can actually get outside of a hotel room or a conference center," he said last week, adding that his trip still would be "symbolically important."

Security concerns and the logistics of presidential travel will keep Obama at a distance from most Kenyans. He will skip a visit to Kogelo, the rural village in western Kenya where his father was born and buried, and where his step-grandmother and other

family members still live.

Obama's two days of events will be confined to Nairobi, the capital where he will meet with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, attend the Global Entrepreneurship Summit, and speak to civil society leaders. On Sunday, he will go to Ethiopia.

Despite the limits on Obama's movement and interactions with the Kenyan people, his visit is highly anticipated in the East African nation. Even as a U.S. senator, he was greeted by cheering crowds when he made his last visit to Kenya, in 2006.

Ahead of Obama's arrival Friday, some Kenyans have adopted a rousing segment of an Obama speech as their cellphone ringtone. U.S. and Kenyan flags lined the road leading from Nairobi's main airport.

Obama's visit is like "a brother coming back," said Nelly Ngugu, customer relations manager at a Nairobi cafe.

Before Obama's travel plans were announced, there had been some disappointment that the U.S. president who has written and spoken emotionally of his Kenyan roots had not returned since taking office.

Analysts questioned whether America's first black president was missing an opportunity to give Africa more prominence in U.S. foreign policy.

Much of Obama's international focus in his first term was on strengthening ties with Asia and trying to reset U.S. policy in the Middle East. His only visit to sub-Saharan Africa during his first four years in office was a short stop in Ghana.

At the time, there was persistent and inaccurate speculation that he was born in Kenya, not the United States. Some political opponents tried to use the rumors to undercut Obama's eligibility for president.

As late as 2011, a CBS/New York Times poll showed that one-quarter of all Americans believed Obama was not born in the U.S.

Obama's re-election raised renewed hopes for a visit to Kenya, but the political situation there complicated those plans.

Kenyatta, the son of the country's first president, was elected president in 2013, but faced charges in the International Criminal Court stemming from his alleged role in stoking ethnic violence following Kenya's troubled 2007 election.

"The timing was not right for me as the president of the United States to be visiting Kenya when those issues are still being worked on and, hopefully, at some point resolved," Obama said of his decision to pass over Kenya in favor of South Africa, Tanzania and Senegal during a 2013 trip to Africa. □

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After Tennessee Shootings, Armed Citizens Guard Recruiters

Continued from Front

On Tuesday, the founder and president of Oath Keepers, a Las Vegas-based Constitution activist group, issued a national call to members to guard centers. Many were already guarding centers in Tennessee, Arkansas and Oklahoma, president Stewart Rhodes said.

Rhodes said it's "absolutely insane" that recruiters aren't allowed to be armed. "They're sitting ducks," Rhodes said Tuesday. "They'd be better off if they were walking down the streets of Baghdad, because at least in Baghdad, they could move. Here, they're stationary." Capt. Jim Stenger, a Marine Corps public affairs officer for the recruiting district that includes parts of seven Midwestern states, said he hopes the gun-toting civilians will go home. "While we greatly appreciate the support of the



A small group of armed citizens stand guard outside a Colorado Springs, Colo., Armed Forces Career Center Wednesday, July 22, 2015. Gun-toting citizens are showing up at military recruiting centers around the country, saying they plan to protect recruiters following last week's killing of four Marines and a sailor in Chattanooga, Tenn.

(Michael Ciaglo/The Gazette via AP)

American public during this tragedy, we ask that citizens do not stand guard at our recruiting offices," Stenger said in a statement.

U.S. Army Recruiting Command spokesman Brian Lepley said, while tragic, deadly incidents have happened only twice in six

years at recruiting centers: in Chattanooga last week, and in Little Rock in 2009 in a shooting that killed one soldier and injured another.

"Recruiting stations need to be out in the public; we need to be out where young people are," Lepley said. Most recruiters are Afghanistan and Iraq war veterans, well trained in dealing with shooters, he added.

A group of veterans and their supporters began guarding a Navy-Marine recruiting station in Madison, Wisconsin.

"Just civic pride," said David Walters, a 30-year-old Army veteran. "It's good to show that people can still come together."

In Hiram, Georgia, five people stood outside a recruiting office Friday with their personal firearms as a show of support. They had a pop-up tent, a few lawn chairs and American flags, Police Chief Todd Vande Zande said.

"If it makes them feel better as American citizens and they're not doing anything illegal, then I'm all for it," he said. □

Charges including hate crimes for accused Charleston shooter

ERIC TUCKER
 MEG KINNARD
 Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The man accused of slaying of nine black church members in Charleston last month was indicted Wednesday on 33 federal counts, including hate crimes, firearms violations and obstructing the practice of religion, which could include the death penalty. Attorney General Loretta Lynch announced the federal grand jury indictments of 21-year-old Dylann Roof. The charges have been expected since Roof was arrested following the June 17 shootings at Emanuel African Methodist Episco-

pal Church in downtown Charleston.

Roof, who is white, appeared in photos waving rebel Confederate flags, and survivors told police that he hurled racial insults during the attack. The shootings prompted an abrupt shift in political willingness to take down the rebel flag from the South Carolina Statehouse grounds and renewed a movement to remove it from the public sphere around the South.

The flag, flown by armies of the secessionist pro-slavery Confederacy during the Civil War, is claimed by some white southerners as a symbol of regional and



Attorney General Loretta Lynch speaks at a news conference at the Justice Department in Washington. Lynch announced that Dylann Roof, the man accused of slaying of nine black church members in Charleston last month was indicted July 22, on 33 federal counts, including hate crimes, firearms violations and obstructing the practice of religion, which could include the death penalty.

(AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais)

ancestral pride but has also been used by white supremacists.

Federal officials had previously said that the shootings generally meet the legal requirements for a hate crime and that federal charges were likely.

Roof already faces state charges including nine counts of murder.

Hate crime cases are often challenging for the government because it must prove that a defendant was primarily motivated by a victim's race or religion as opposed to other factors frequently invoked by defense attorneys, such as drug addiction or mental illness. □



Woman who died in cell mentioned previous suicide attempt

DAVID WARREN
Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — A woman whose death in a Texas jail has raised suspicions about

process that she had tried to kill herself in the past, the sheriff said Wednesday. Sheriff Glenn Smith told The Associated Press during a

suicide attempt, while being asked a series of questions posed to each person booked into the jail. He did not provide further details

sending Bland's family, Cannon Lambert, said relatives have "no evidence" that she ever attempted suicide or had been treated for depression.

It was not immediately clear why the department hadn't previously disclosed details of conversations with Bland, or whether they were shared with other jail staff. It also wasn't clear whether Bland was on suicide watch or otherwise specially monitored during her weekend incarceration.

A second jailer also interviewed Bland, according to the sheriff. The 28-year-old black woman said she was not depressed but was upset about her arrest, which occurred following a confrontation with a white officer who had stopped her for a minor traffic violation.

Smith says both jailers who spoke with Bland insisted that she appeared fine when being booked on a charge of assaulting a public servant.

Bland's body was found three days later in her cell.

Authorities say she hanged herself using a plastic liner taken from a garbage can. Her death comes after nearly a year of heightened national scrutiny of police and their dealings with black suspects, especially those who have been killed by officers or die in police custody.

Smith said Wednesday that no one gained access to the cell and contributed to Bland's death.

"My obligation is to run this jail and keep everyone safe," he said.

Bland's family has said she was not despondent and was looking forward to starting a new job. Lambert said Wednesday that Bland had just bought groceries and was ecstatic about her new job when she was pulled over.

However, Bland posted a video to her Facebook page in March, saying she was suffering from "a little bit of depression as well as PTSD," or post-traumatic stress disorder. At least one friend has said she was just venting after a bad day. □



Texas Sen. Royce West, center, speaks next to Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, left, and Waller County District Attorney Elton Mathis during a news conference, Tuesday, July 21, 2015, in Prairie View, Texas, following a meeting regarding the investigation into the death of Sandra Bland.

(AP Photo/Pat Sullivan)

the official conclusion that she hanged herself told a guard during the booking

telephone interview that Sandra Bland told a jailer July 10 about a previous

about the conversation. Asked about Smith's assertion, the attorney repre-

Prosecutors say Holmes deserves death for Colorado shootings

SADIE GURMAN
Associated Press

CENTENNIAL, Colorado (AP)

— James Holmes should be put to death for the Colorado cinema shootings because he deliberately and cruelly killed 12 people, including a 6-year-old girl, prosecutors told jurors Wednesday.

The same jurors who convicted Holmes of murder and attempted murder last week — swiftly dismissing his claim that he was legally insane during the attack — must now decide whether to sentence him to death or life in prison with-

out parole. Prosecutor Rich Orman made the case for death, showing jurors photos of each person killed and reading each person's name. "The defendant killed, and you have convicted him of killing, Jonathan Blunt," he began.

When he came to the youngest, 6-year-old Veronica Moser-Sullivan, he reminded jurors that she "had four gunshot wounds to her little body."

The defense offered no counter-argument, effectively conceding that prosecutors had met the first of several requirements for

the death penalty: That at least one aggravating factor was present in the massacre.

Jurors went home for the day without deciding whether prosecutors had made that case. They will resume deliberations Thursday.

The jurors have the final say on Holmes' sentence, but they also have a major influence how the proceedings unfold. After each phase of the process, they meet to decide whether they've heard enough to make a decision. And with no counterpoint from the

defense on aggravating factors, jurors immediately began deliberating whether prosecutors had made that part of the case beyond a reasonable doubt. Sentencing is expected to last a month, and could be even more heart-wrenching and polarizing than the 11-week trial that resulted in convictions on murder, attempted murder and other crimes for his July 20, 2012, attack.

The attempted murder convictions were for the 58 people he wounded and another 12 who were injured in the mayhem he

caused. But jurors will decide sentences for only the 12 people he murdered; sentencing for the lesser convictions is set by law.

Assuming jurors agree, the defense will lead the next phase, trying to show that mitigating factors make it wrong to execute him. This is where the personal values of each juror becomes paramount. They must consider whether the extent of his mental problems should outweigh the lifelong suffering Holmes caused by opening fire on the audience in a crowded Batman movie premiere. □



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NYC strikes deal with Uber: No cap on company during study

JONATHAN LEMIRE
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New York City and Uber struck an eleventh-hour deal that backs off, for now, placing a cap on the number of cars the ride-hailing company can have on the streets of the nation's largest city.

Mayor Bill de Blasio's administration announced late Wednesday — on the eve of a City Council vote that could have established the restriction — that Uber agreed to a four-month study on the impact of the cars on the city's traffic and the environment.

Under the deal, the city will not cap Uber's growth during those four months.

The agreement contrasts sharply with the legislation the council was set to vote on Thursday, which called for a 1 percent cap on the San Francisco-based company's growth within New York City during a yearlong study. Uber has steadfastly opposed any cap, and the company and City Hall had traded increasingly nasty barbs over the past week.

But the hostilities were set aside to announce the surprise arrangement, which also included a commitment to turn over far more data to the city on the location and duration of its rides. The company also agreed to discuss working toward making more of its vehicles handicap-accessible and contributing to the region's mass transit network.

"The city received a willingness on the company's part to make sure there was no effort to flood the market with dramatically increased rates of growth," said First Deputy Mayor

Tony Shorris, in charge at City Hall as de Blasio returns from a conference at the Vatican. "The company eventually agreed to what we've been asking for a while."

City officials said the deal, which will keep Uber at its current rate of growth, was reminiscent of what the de Blasio administration offered Uber early in the negotiating process. It was brokered after Uber officials reached out to Shorris on Tuesday night, setting up a meeting with officials from the council and the mayor's office the next day.

Though City Council staffers said the cap legislation would have passed, the de Blasio administration's position appeared to weaken as Uber unleashed its ad campaign. Officials in the mayor's office said a cap could still be imposed if Uber reneges on the agreement, though it was unclear if the necessary council votes would still be there in four months.

"We are pleased new drivers will continue to be free to join the for-hire industry and partner with Uber," Josh Mohrer, Uber NYC's general manager, said in a statement. "Together, we can build an even better, more reliable transportation system."

The \$40 billion company has become a dominant force on the streets of New York, dispatching 25,000 cars — up from under 100 just four years ago — compared to 13,000 of the city's iconic yellow taxis.

In pushing for a cap, the de Blasio administration cited concern over increased congestion on Manhattan's clogged streets. □

GOP scrambling to adjust to 'Trumpism'

BILL BARROW
Associated Press

AIKEN, South Carolina (AP)

— Donald Trump is on his way to the Mexican border, the latest event in a presidential campaign some of his Republican rivals would like to dismiss as a sideshow — a "carnival act," as one puts it. But the billionaire developer and reality TV host has been stealing their thunder for days and left them scrambling to adjust to a race dominated by a bombastic longshot.

Trump will be in Laredo, Texas, on Thursday, highlighting his unyielding stance on immigration. The trip will revisit a topic that has stirred criticism that has now grown into open hostility from some Republican contenders.

From party heavyweights like Jeb Bush to recently announced candidates like Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker and Ohio Gov. John Kasich, the contenders are confronted by Trump's hair-trigger habit of calling out his critics by name, vilifying the Republican establishment and roiling the debate over immigration and more.

On Thursday, Trump plans to hold a news conference at the U.S.-Mexico border, meet members of the union that represents Border Control agents and speak to law enforcement officers, his campaign said. The border became a flashpoint in the Republican debate when Trump branded Mexican immigrants rapists and drug-bearing criminals.

After that episode came a broadside against Sen. John McCain, who earned Trump's ire by saying his remarks about immigrants had brought out "crazies." Trump mocked McCain's



Republican presidential hopeful Donald Trump speaks at his South Carolina campaign kickoff rally in Bluffton, S.C., Tuesday, July 21, 2015.

(AP Photo/Stephen B. Morton)

experience in the Vietnam War where he was tortured as a prisoner, called him "dumb" and laced into his record on veterans' issues in the Senate.

In Washington, former Texas Gov. Rick Perry was asked about Trump's planned trip on to the border. He snapped, "I hope he can find the border because I'm not sure he's ever been there before."

This, after Perry denounced Trump's campaign as a "cancer on conservatism" and "barking carnival act" in a speech that laced into "Trumpism: a toxic mix of demagoguery, mean-spiritedness and nonsense that will lead the Republican Party to perdition if pursued."

Indeed, the insults flying between Trump and his fiercest critics have been caustic. Sen. Lindsey Graham called him a "jackass" a day earlier and Trump responded by calling Graham an "idiot" and giving out the senator's cellphone number, jamming his voice mail.

Others in the field have

been more measured, though showing signs of growing exasperation. Bush, in particular, has conspicuously tried to avoid alienating Trump's supporters — "good people" with "legitimate concerns" — even while branding Trump's rhetoric "ugly" and "mean-spirited."

The feud is unfolding as the candidates prepare for the first Republican debate, a venue to which the top 10 in national polling will be invited out of a swollen lineup of 16. Although they are all accomplished, few are well known nationally, and "Trumpism" isn't making it easier for them to get their messages out at a time when mere name recognition can drive popularity in polling. Trump, a longtime celebrity, is almost guaranteed a spot in the debate. Bush, in South Carolina on Wednesday, said he wasn't approaching the debate thinking about Trump or any rival who might be on the stage. "My objective with this is to, wherever I can, share my record," he said. □

Black state official 'overwhelmed' by viral photo response

SEANNA ADCOX

Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) —

Amid angry demonstrations over the Confederate flag last weekend, a quiet gesture of human kindness unfolded on the steps to South Carolina's Statehouse: A white man overcome by the sweltering heat and wearing a Nazi swastika on his T-shirt was escorted to rest and shelter by a black man wearing an officer's uniform.

That man in the uniform was Leroy Smith, who runs the state Department of Public Safety, and a photo of his Saturday encounter with the man wearing the swastika has gone viral on the Internet.

Smith said Wednesday that he didn't think twice about assisting the ailing man.

"I saw a man who needed some help, and I was going to help him," Smith told The Associated Press in a phone interview.

Smith said the man in the photo was actually the second demonstrator he helped up the Statehouse steps in the 100-degree heat, as tensions between white supremacists and



In this July 18, 2015 photo provided by Rob Godfrey, police officer Leroy Smith, left, helps a man wearing National Socialist Movement attire up the stairs during a rally in Columbia, S.C. Smith, the director of South Carolina's public safety agency, said Monday, July 20, 2015, he hopes the photo that shows him helping the white man wearing a racist T-shirt will be a catalyst for people to work toward overcoming hate and violence. (Rob Godfrey via AP)

counter-protesters behind police barricades mounted.

"You could feel the tension in the air as the crowd started to swell," Smith said.

The rally organized by the North Carolina-based Loyal

White Knights of the KKK overlapped an earlier rally on the opposite side of the Statehouse organized by a Florida-based group affiliated with the New Black Panther Party.

The dueling rallies came

one week after the Confederate flag was removed from Statehouse grounds. The Legislature voted to remove it following the massacre of nine parishioners at a historic black church in Charleston, including the pastor, Sen. Clementa Pinckney. The white man charged with killing them had posed with a Confederate battle flag in online photos.

About 50 people rallied with the KKK, including members of the Detroit-based National Socialist Movement, a neo-Nazi group.

They gave no speeches, but shouted "white power" and racial insults as they walked back and forth behind the barricade waving Confederate flags. Shouting and obscenities escalated between them and the crowd, and officers broke up some fights. Smith monitored the scene as he paced back and forth on the Statehouse steps.

Smith said that's when a protester approached, saying someone needed medical help. Smith and Columbia Fire Chief Aubrey Jenkins, who also is black, responded to a demonstrator overcome by the heat. The first white demonstrator they helped climb the steps and enter the air-conditioned Statehouse could walk on his own. The second clearly could not, Smith said.

"He was struggling, fatigued, appeared to be lethargic. I knew there was no way he could make it up the steps on his own," Smith said. So Smith coached him up the steps, putting his right hand on his arm and his left arm around his body.

Smith didn't get the man's name, and they had no extended conversation.

"He told me he wasn't from around here. I told him it gets hot in South Carolina," Smith recalled.

Both demonstrators they escorted were treated inside by local emergency workers.

Gov. Nikki Haley's spokesman, Rob Godfrey, was on the Statehouse portico observing when he snapped a cellphone photo of Smith helping the man. He quick-

ly posted it to Twitter, where it has received hundreds of thousands of views. It's also been picked up by news media around the world.

"What Leroy Smith did totally overshadowed what went on at the Statehouse when those from outside South Carolina tried to disrupt a time of healing and unity in our state," he said Wednesday.

Through a spokeswoman, Smith initially fended off requests for an interview. But as dozens of news organizations flooded his office with requests, he relented. Even so, he sought to credit others who work for his agency. At least one officer was pushed to the ground during the Saturday demonstrations. Fights broke out as officers escorted the protesters from behind the barricades to a nearby parking garage.

"I can't overstate how proud I am of law enforcement officers who put their lives in peril to maintain order," Smith said.

The Associated Press has been unable to find and interview the man wearing the swastika T-shirt.

A spokesman for the National Socialist Movement said the man in the photo, as well as a woman walking up the steps behind him, are members of that organization but he declined to provide their names.

Instead, he reacted angrily, made offensive comments to a reporter and hung up when asked questions about the viral photo. He said he did not want reporters to contact the man or woman.

The group is the largest and most prominent neo-Nazi group in the United States, said Mark Potok, an expert on extremism with the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Smith said, "I've just been overwhelmed" by the response to the photo.

At the time, he said, he didn't think about it. He was just doing his job. But he realizes why the photo attracted so much attention: "There was a KKK rally and a public servant law enforcement officer showed love and compassion in the heat of that." □



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US Financial Front:

Home sales surged in June to fastest pace in 8-plus years

JOSH BOAK

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) —

Americans bought homes in June at the fastest rate in over eight years, pushing prices to record highs as buyer demand has eclipsed the availability of houses on the market.

The National Association of Realtors said Wednesday that sales of existing homes climbed 3.2 percent last month to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 5.49 million, the highest rate since February 2007. Sales have jumped 9.6 percent over the past 12 months, while the number of listings has risen just 0.4 percent.

The median home price has climbed 6.5 percent over the past 12 months to \$236,400, the highest level — unadjusted for inflation — reported by the Realtors. Home-buying has recently surged as more buyers have flooded into the real estate market. Robust hiring over the past 21 months and an economic recovery now in its sixth year have enabled more Americans to set aside money for a down payment. But the rising demand has failed to draw more sellers into the market, limiting the availability of homes and sparking higher prices that could cap sales growth in the coming months.

"The recent pace can't be sustained, but it points clearly to upside potential," said Ian Shepherdson, chief economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics.

Nationally, a mere five months' supply of homes was on the market in June, compared with 5.5 months a year ago and an average of six months in a healthy market.

Some markets are barely adding any listings. The condominium market in Massachusetts contains just 1.8 months' supply, according to a Federal Reserve report this month. The majority of real estate agents in the Atlanta Fed region — which ranges from Alabama to Florida — said that inventories were flat or falling over the past year.

Some of the recent sales burst appears to come from the prospect of low mortgage rates beginning to rise as Fed officials consider raising a key interest rate from its near-zero level later this year. Past efforts by the Fed officials to reduce their stimulus efforts have led to higher mortgage rates, creating expectations that homebuyers will face increased borrowing costs later this year. That possibility is prompting some buyers to finalize sales before higher rates make borrowing costs prohibitively expensive, noted Daren Blomquist, a vice president at RealtyTrac, a housing analytics firm.

The premiums that the Federal Housing Administration charges borrowers to insure mortgages are also lower this year, further fueling buying activity, Blomquist said.



Realtor Stephan Marshall, top, walks with potential buyer Sasha Martinez at a home for sale in Pacifica, Calif. The National Association of Realtors released existing home sales for June on Wednesday, July 22, 2015. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu)

It's also possible that more homebuyers are aggressively checking the market for listings, enabling them to act fast with offers despite the lack of new inventory. "Buyers can more quickly be alerted of new listings and also more conveniently access real estate data to help them pre-search a potential purchase before they even step foot in the property," said Blomquist, adding that this could help to explain why sales growth have dramatically outpaced new listings so far this year.

Properties typically sold last month in 34 days, the shortest time since the Realtors began tracking the figure in May 2011. There were fewer all-cash, individual investor and distressed home sales in the market, as more traditional buyers have returned.

Sales improved last month in all four regions: Northeast, Midwest, South and West.

Still, the limited supplies

could prove to be a drag on sales growth in the coming months.

Ever rising home values are stretching the budgets of first-time buyers and owners looking to upgrade. As homes become less affordable, demand will likely taper off. Home prices have increased at more than three times the pace of wages. The average hourly wage has risen just 2 percent over the past 12 months to \$24.95 an hour, according to the Labor Department.

Some would-be buyers are also spurning their limited options on the market. Tony Smith, a real estate broker in Charlotte, North Carolina, said some renters shopping for homes are now choosing instead to re-sign their leases and wait until a broader and better selection of properties comes onto the market. Construction has yet to satisfy rising demand, as builders are increasingly focused on the growing

rental market.

Approved building permits rose 7.4 percent to an annual rate of 1.34 million in June, the highest level since July 2007, the Commerce Department said last week. Almost all the gains came for apartment complexes, while permits for houses last month rose only 0.9 percent.

The share of Americans owning homes has fallen this year to a seasonally adjusted 63.8 percent, the lowest level since 1989.

Real estate had until recently lagged behind much of the six-year rebound from the recession, hobbled by the wave of foreclosures that came after the housing bubble began to burst roughly eight years ago.

But the job market found new traction in early 2014. Employers added 3.1 million jobs last year and are on pace to add 2.5 million jobs this year. As millions more Americans have found work, their new paychecks are increasingly going to housing, both in terms of renting and owning.

Low mortgage rates have also helped, although rates are now starting to climb to levels that could slow buying activity.

The average 30-year fixed rate was 4.09 percent last week, according to the mortgage giant Freddie Mac. The average has risen from a 52-week low of 3.59 percent. □

Shell gets permits for limited oil drilling in Arctic waters

KEVIN FREKING

DAN JOLING

Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) —

The Obama administration has given Royal Dutch Shell PLC approval to begin limited exploratory oil drilling off Alaska's northwest coast.

The two permits issued Wednesday clear the way for drilling in Chukchi Sea but with conditions.

Shell can only drill the top sections of wells because

the company doesn't have on site the critical emergency response equipment to cap the well in case of a leak. That equipment is aboard a ship headed to Portland, Oregon, for repairs.

The Interior Department's Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement said in a statement that Shell could submit an amended application for deeper drilling when the capping stack can be de-

ployed within 24 hours.

"Without question, activities conducted offshore Alaska must be held to the highest safety, environmental protection and emergency response standards," said the bureau's director, Brian Salerno.

The department had given a conditional OK in May to Shell's drilling plan, pending the company's ability to obtain all necessary permits from state and federal

agencies.

Some environmental groups worry the Arctic's remoteness and rugged conditions will hamper cleanup efforts in the event of a spill, risking devastation of a fragile ecosystem.

Cindy Shogan, executive director of the Alaska Wilderness League, called it the wrong choice.

"This decision puts the fate of the fragile Arctic Ocean, and our climate future, in the hands of Shell Oil," she

said in a statement.

Shell spokeswoman Kelly op de Weegh said by email that receipt of the drilling permits signals the end of the permitting process, and drilling will begin when the area is clear of sea ice.

"We remain committed to operating in a safe, environmentally responsible manner and look forward to evaluating what could potentially become a national energy resource base," she said. □

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Greece tackles final reform hurdle before new bailout talks



Greece's Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras speaks during an emergency parliament session in Athens, Thursday, July 23, 2015. Greek lawmakers launched a late-night debate Wednesday on further reforms demanded by international creditors in return for a third multi-billion-euro bailout, with attention focusing on government dissenters who have vowed to reject the measures.

(AP Photo/Thanassis Stavrakis)

M. HADJICOSTIS
N. PAPHITIS

Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Greek lawmakers debated into the early hours Thursday on further reforms demanded by international creditors in return for a third multi-billion-euro bailout, with attention focusing

on government dissenters who have vowed to reject the measures.

Despite the revolt in Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras' own party, parliament is expected to approve the draft legislation in the second such crucial vote in a week — and again with broad support from pro-

eurozone opposition parties. Failure to do so would derail the bailout and rekindle fears over Greece's future in the shared euro currency.

As with last week's vote, Tsipras' main problem lies with hard-line lawmakers in his party, many of whom see the reforms as a be-

trayal of the anti-austerity platform that brought their Syriza party to power in January.

Addressing parliament, Tsipras said the reforms were a necessary price to pay to keep Greece alive after stormy talks with its creditors nearly collapsed earlier this month.

"There is no doubt that the process we are following today ... is not a normal process," he told lawmakers. "But the essence is that ... we were led to a tough compromise, on the basis of which we are summoned today to legislate under a state of emergency."

He also ruled out resigning. "The presence of the left in this government isn't about the pursuit of office, it's a bastion from which to fight for our people's interests," he said. "And as far as I'm concerned, I won't abandon this bastion, at least of my own free will."

Tsipras said approval would give Greece breathing room to quash speculation that the country will be forced to abandon the euro, and help it regain market confidence and

eventually tap bond markets again.

Before the debate got underway, about 10,000 people demonstrated outside parliament, protesting the latest measures to overhaul Greece's judicial and banking sectors. Minor violence marred the end of the protest when a few teenagers threw petrol bombs at riot police, but no injuries or arrests were reported.

Negotiations with creditors are expected to start soon after the latest package of reforms is approved.

The radical left-led government hopes the new bailout talks can conclude before Aug. 20, when Greece must repay a debt worth more than 3 billion euros (\$3.3 billion) to the European Central Bank.

On Wednesday, the ECB provided a new vital cash injection to Greece's battered banks. A European banking official told The Associated Press the ECB decided to increase emergency liquidity to Greek banks by 900 million euros (\$980 million) — the second such cash injection in just under a week. □

Tony Blair warns UK's Labour: Left turn will lose voters

JILL LAWLESS
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain's Labour Party lost the election. Now it is losing its way, careening into a crisis that could rip apart a party that governed for long stretches of the 20th century.

Labour is seeking a new leader to help it regain voters' trust, and an old-school socialist lawmaker who has never held government office has gone from longshot to apparent contender — to the hor-

ror of party chiefs and the delight of political opponents.

The strongly anti-austerity Jeremy Corbyn has risen to second-favorite among four candidates in bookmakers' odds, behind more centrist legislator Andy Burnham, as he wins over a growing number of disillusioned Labour members.

Labour lost power in 2010, and was trounced by the Conservatives on May 7 in an election polls had predicted would be close.

Voters handed Prime Minister David Cameron's party another five-year term, convinced by its argument that spending cuts were needed to reduce a huge deficit created by Labour's economic mismanagement.

Former Prime Minister Tony Blair, who led Labour to three consecutive election victories, made a rare return to British politics Wednesday to warn his old party that Labour needs to "win from the center." He said adopting an "old-

fashioned leftist platform" of tax-and-spend policies would alienate voters just as it did during the 1980s, when Labour floundered as Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher moved Britain's economy to the right.

Blair, who left office in 2007, told the party to "move on — but for heaven's sake don't move back."

All parties go through soul-searching after losing an election, but Labour's crisis is more profound. At the heart of the problem

is an unresolved identity crisis. Labour was built as the party of the industrial working class, then transformed by Blair and his "New Labour" colleagues to embrace private investment, personal wealth and the financial sector.

Blair's approach gave Labour 13 years in power between 1997 and 2010. But many members believe the party has abandoned its principles. And many have not forgiven Blair for taking Britain into the U.S.-led Iraq war. □

Suicide bomber kills 19 people in north Afghanistan market

RAHIM FAIEZ

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)

— A suicide bomber attacked a market crowded with shoppers Wednesday in northern Afghanistan, killing at least 19 people and wounding 38 amid other Taliban assaults in the area, authorities said.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the powerful blast in Faryab province's Almar district, but suspicion immediately fell on the Taliban. Overnight, there had been an Afghan military operation targeting the insurgents in the same district.

The attack happened on a weekly shopping day for the area, meaning the market teemed with shoppers and soldiers protecting it when the bomber detonated his explosive vest, police said.

The "target of the attacker was military forces that were present in the area but the majority of the victims were innocent civilians," deputy provincial police chief Baryalia Basharyar said.

Both Abdul Satar Barez, the acting provincial governor, and Sayed Masoud Yaqubi, a spokesman for the provincial police chief, gave the casualties figures. Barez also said he feared the final death toll may be higher as many among the wounded were in critical condition.

The United Nations Mission in Afghanistan condemned the attack, saying it showed insurgents' "appalling disregard for human life." Taliban insurgents have stepped up their attacks on Afghan soldiers and police in recent months. U.S. and NATO troops formally ended their combat mission at the end of last year, leaving Afghan forces in charge of security in the country.

In neighboring Zawzjan province, a patrol of the security forces belonging to the country's first vice president, Abdul Rashid Dostum, also came under attack late Tuesday night, said Sultan Faizy, a spokesman for the official. □

Top militant urges holy war against Egyptian president

SARAH EL DEEB

Associated Press

CAIRO (AP)

— A former army officer who is one of Egypt's most wanted militants called on his fellow countrymen to wage holy war against President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, describing him as a "new pharaoh" in a new recording.

The call purportedly by the militant, Hisham el-Ashmawi, marks at least the third time a former military officer has been named as a suspect in major attacks against troops in recent months, a reflection of the increasing polarization in Egyptian society. It also suggests a new insurgent group has joined the fighting in the country's lawless Sinai Peninsula.

Officials say el-Ashmawi has worked closely with the Sinai-based Ansar Beit al-Maqdis, or "Champions of Jerusalem," militant group that pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group last year and is blamed for some of Egypt's most high-profile deadly attacks.

In the recording, el-Ashmawi, who goes by the nom de guerre Abu Omar el-Muhajir, appears to be announcing a new group in Egypt called al-Morabtoon that's allied to al-Qaida. That's a name previously used by a militant group that operates in Algeria and Libya, but it is unclear if the new Egyptian group is linked to it.

El-Ashmawi also purportedly allies himself in the audio with the Islamic State rival, al-Qaida, led by Egyptian militant Ayman al-Zawahri. In the audio, a quote by al-Zawahri comes before el-

tracks militant messages, first reported on the audio Tuesday. The message later was later widely shared on social media websites by militant sympathizers, though The Associated

last month, the first successful assassination since the 1981 killing of President Anwar Sadat. His assassins were military officers turned militants. He also is wanted over the failed assassina-



Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, center, and Defense Minister Sedqi Sobh, left, stand to attention while other members of the military look on at the Air Defense Academy in Alexandria, Egypt. The Egyptian president spoke to new military cadets on the occasion of the 63th anniversary of the officers' coup in 1952 that toppled the monarchy.

(M. Samaha/Egyptian Presidency via AP)

Ashmawi speaks, criticizing el-Sissi.

"He is following the footsteps of his ancestor pharaoh, who declared himself God the great, using the worst type of torture and harassment of Muslims and using the deceptive magic of the media," el-Ashmawi purportedly says.

The U.S.-based SITE Intelligence Group, which

Press couldn't independently verify it.

One military official said el-Ashmawi was named as a suspect in the July 11 bombing outside the Italian Consulate in Cairo that killed a bystander, the first attack on a diplomatic mission in Egypt. El-Ashmawi also is named as a suspect in the killing of the country's chief prosecutor late

tion attempt against the interior minister in 2013 and a brazen attack against troops last summer near the border with Libya. His name was among two dozen militants named in an Interior Ministry video released to the public in January 2014. Two other senior security officials said el-Ashmawi was a major in the special forces dismissed in 2009. □

Iraq:

Officials say Baghdad market bombs kill 26 people

VIVIAN SALAMA

Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP)

— A pair of car bombs exploded Wednesday at crowded popular markets in predominantly Shiite neighborhoods of the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, killing at least 26 people and wounding 58, authorities said.

The first explosion took place in the impoverished neighborhood of al-Bayaa in southwestern Baghdad, a police official said. The blast killed at least 18 people and wounded 36, the official said.

Later Wednesday, a second car bomb detonated in the northeastern neighborhood of al-Shaab, killing at least eight people and wounding 22, police said. Hospital officials corroborated the casualty figures. All officials spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to brief journalists.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks. The Islamic State militant group frequently targets Shiite areas across the country, as well as military checkpoints

and government installations. The radical Sunni group seeks to destabilize the Shiite-led government in Baghdad and targets those they view as apostates. They hold roughly a third of Iraq and neighboring Syria in their self-declared "caliphate."

On Friday, the militant group attacked a popular market in Iraq's eastern Diyala province, killing 115 people — the majority of them Shiite — in what was one of the largest single attacks in Iraq over the past decade. Bombings occur

almost daily in Baghdad, but violence has been relatively subdued in the capital since the height of sectarian violence in 2006 and 2007.

Large-scale military operations are currently underway in Iraq's western Anbar province and in Salahuddin province, north of Baghdad, as the Iraqi military and the government-sanctioned Popular Mobilization Forces look to reclaim territory in the country's Sunni heartland. A U.S.-led coalition is supporting the operation with airstrikes. □

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After escape, Mexico cartel boss faces altered drug business

K. CORCORAN
Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's most powerful drug lord, Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, has a lot to catch up on as he returns to a drug-trafficking landscape that has shifted considerably during his 17 months behind bars.

Rival cartels have been vanquished, and infighting among factions in Guzman's own Sinaloa gang has killed dozens in the resort area of La Paz and Los Cabos on the Baja peninsula. A new and rapidly strengthening international cartel is waging a fierce battle against soldiers and police in western Mexico, even using a rocket-propelled grenade to force down a helicopter — a style at odds with Guzman's more corporate-like Sinaloa.

Other Mexican or Colombian cartels working with street gangs in Central America may have stolen some of Guzman's transit routes.

In the quiet since Guzman broke out of Mexico's top-maximum security prison a little more than a week



Federal Police patrol a checkpoint west of Mexico City. A widespread manhunt including highway checkpoints, stepped up border security and the closure of an international airport has failed to turn up any trace of drug lord Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman since his escape through an underground tunnel in his prison cell.

(AP Photo/Marco Ugarte)

ago, dropping into a hole in his shower floor and fleeing on a motorbike through a mile-long tunnel, friends and foes alike waiting to see what he'll do next.

"I think he's going to want to regain the control that he lost," said Jack Riley, the Drug Enforcement Administration's top agent, who has spent years tracking Guzman. "I think that's one of the reasons that I don't

think he'd leave the country."

Internal DEA documents obtained by The Associated Press show that while Guzman was locked up, the Sinaloa Cartel was controlled by Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada Garcia and Rafael Caro Quintero, two of the most traditional, old-school capos, plus the newer Damaso Lopez Nunez and Guzman's son,

Ivan Archivaldo Guzman. Even while behind bars, Guzman was thought to be giving directions to his son and other cartel members "via the attorneys who visited Guzman-Loera in prison and possibly through the use of a cellphone provided ... by corrupt prison guards," the documents say.

How much the Sinaloa cartel's operations have changed depends on how involved Guzman was from prison. The complexity and success of his escape suggests he still had major input, if not day-to-day control, experts say.

But he is operating in a new dynamic, as the Mexican government has taken out the leaders of other major cartels as well. Since Guzman's February 2014 arrest, authorities have arrested Hector Beltran Leyva, head of the cartel bearing his name, as well as the Juarez Cartel's Vicente Carrillo Fuentes, Knights Templar's Servando "La Tuta" Gomez, and the Zetas' Omar Trevino Morales. Knights Templar leader Nazario Moreno died in a

shootout with soldiers.

Only the Jalisco New Generation, the big gun cartel that forced down the helicopter, has used the void to grow into one of Mexico's most powerful international criminal groups. It started partly out of the methamphetamine division of Sinaloa run by the late Ignacio "Nacho" Coronel, and had been considered a Sinaloa ally. But no one knows how those two top cartels will interact now.

"The Jalisco cartel has been growing ... and Sinaloa was debilitated by the arrest of El Chapo," said Raul Benitez, a security expert with the National Autonomous University of Mexico. "El Chapo surely will try to restore the power of Sinaloa."

A similar power grab has occurred in Honduras, where the Mara Salvatrucha gang has moved up from extortion and street-corner drug sales to moving drug shipments from Colombia through the region, said Samuel Logan of Southern Pulse, a business and security consulting firm.

"I don't know what side they're on, if they're really working for the Colombians or the Mexicans, but Chapo's people lost a lot of turf at the end of last year and the supply chain is hurting," Logan said. "So he may be working to build that up again."

Over the last year, the Mexican government made numerous hits on the Gulf and Zetas cartels that control the border of Tamaulipas state alongside Texas. □

Venezuela arrests 2 military officers for drug trafficking

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Two retired Venezuelan military officers sought on drug trafficking charges have been arrested, authorities announced.

An anti-narcotics task force arrested former National Guard Capt. Vassily Villarreal Ramirez earlier this week, according to a statement released by the Interior Ministry. Ramirez has

long been a wanted man. He was named in an Interpol alert and was classified as a drug kingpin in 2013 by the U.S. Treasury Department. U.S. officials say he has ties to Mexican and Colombian cartels and has been involved with cocaine trafficking.

The task force also arrested former National Guard Lt. Robert Alexander Pinto Gil

earlier this week. The ministry accuses him of leading local drug trafficking gangs. He previously escaped from prison.

National Guard commander Nestor Reverol said Tuesday that the two will be brought before the courts soon. The arrests come amid reports that U.S. prosecutors are investigating the head of Venezuela's

congress for possible ties to cocaine trafficking and money laundering. National Assembly speaker Diosdado Cabello has emphatically denied that he heads a drug cartel composed of senior government and military officials. He has promised to sue the local and international outlets that have published reports related to the investigation. □

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**Despite sea dispute,
Beijing says ties with
Manila can flourish**

JIM GOMEZ

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) —

The Chinese ambassador in Manila said Wednesday that trade between China and the Philippines grew last year despite their protracted territorial conflicts, providing hope their relations could flourish even as tensions remain.

Ambassador Zhao Jianhua also played down reports that Chinese President Xi Jinping may skip the annual APEC summit to be hosted by Manila in November because of the conflicts. He said no decision has been reached because the Philippine government only sent its invitation recently.

"Despite the difficulties we have, I think last year bilateral trade grew 17.6 percent and our trade stands at over \$44 billion," Zhao told reporters after speaking in a Manila business forum, where he highlighted how trade and investment between the Asian neighbors could still expand considerably.

"From these figures, you can see that our bilateral relationship is quite strong ... so that gives us hope for a better relationship," Zhao said.

While China is a large Philippine trading partner, the trade volume has lagged far behind Beijing's trade and investment in other Southeast Asian countries like Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia.

The Philippines has expressed interest in joining the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank but hasn't yet signed up. "The door of AIIB is going to continue to be open to the Philippines," Zhao said. □

Chile:

7 military members held in 1986 death of US resident

LUIS ANDRES HENAO

Associated Press

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) —

Seven former members of the Chilean military have been arrested in the fatal burning of a 19-year-old U.S. resident who was killed in a 1986 protest against the military dictatorship then in power.

The two former officers and five former noncommissioned officers were taken into custody Tuesday night after judge Mario Carroza issued the arrest order.

The latest development in the investigation came after another former soldier testified in November before the judge, breaking a nearly three-decade pact of silence in one of the most prominent cases of human rights abuses during the 17-year dictatorship.

"These people are going to be questioned and we're going to look for information that allows us to determine whether they were involved in some way. What we do know is that they were all there at the time of" the death, Carroza said.

Soldiers doused 19-year-old Rodrigo Rojas and 18-year-old Carmen Quintana with gasoline and set them ablaze during a street demonstration on



In this 2003 photo, Chilean Carmen Gloria Quintana attends a ceremony marking the 30th anniversary of the Sept. 11 military coup lead by Gen. Augusto Pinochet at the government palace La Moneda, in Santiago, Chile.

July 2, 1986.

Rojas died four days later. He was a Chilean-born photographer visiting from the United States, where he lived with his mother in political exile.

Quintana survived and underwent lengthy recovery treatment for severe burns at a hospital in Canada, where she now lives. During a 1987 visit to Chile, Pope John Paul II consoled and embraced her.

On Tuesday, Quintana thanked the former soldier identified as Fernando Guzman for coming forward with new information in the case. In an interview with

(AP Photo/Santiago Llanquin)

Radio Cooperativa, she said the soldiers involved in the attack were teenagers like her at the time and were also victims of the dictatorship because they received death threats to keep silent.

"Today the truth is finally being told and validates what I and so many witnesses always held. Better late than never," Quintana said.

A judge in 1999 ordered the Chilean government to pay Quintana \$470,000.

The burning attack drew condemnation from foreign governments and rights groups in Chile

and abroad. At the time, Chile's army denied any involvement, and dictator Augusto Pinochet even suggested that Rojas and Quintana accidentally set themselves on fire when they carried flammable material to ignite barricades.

"Maybe they had something hidden, it exploded and it burned," Pinochet said at the time.

In his testimony, Guzman denied the two were the victims of their own firebomb, calling it "a total lie."

He said he was carrying the radio that day and he had a clear view of the attack from atop a military truck.

He said a man was lying on the ground while a woman was facing a wall. The commander of one of the patrols that had detained the two, Lt. Julio Castaner, then ordered a soldier to douse them in gasoline, spraying the woman from head to toe and the man on his back, Guzman testified.

Guzman said Castaner used a lighter to taunt the pair and then set them afire. Quintana ran a short distance before soldiers covered her in blankets to extinguish the flames, he said. □

Brazil's Rousseff must explain accounting to court

SAO PAULO (AP) — Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff has been given an order to provide the Federal Audit Court with her written explanation for alleged irregularities in accounting methods her government used in 2014.

The audit court analyzes the Executive Branch's accounts annually and de-

cides whether to approve them. They then go to Congress, which can decide whether to approve the administration's finances for the previous year. The court has never rejected them.

The court's press office said it should take a few weeks before the final ruling is handed down.

Analysts have said that if the court and Congress reject the administration's finances, Rousseff could face charges of administrative dishonesty that could result in her impeachment and the loss of her right to run for public office.

Earlier this year, the audit court found delays in the transfer of Treasury funds to

public banks to pay for the government's social programs, social security payments and unemployment benefits.

Auditors have said that the delays resulted in the banks making upfront payments for the programs in violation of the country's fiscal responsibility law. □



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Fire on Royal Caribbean cruise ship; 1 worker burned

DAVID McFADDEN
Associated Press
KINGSTON, Jamaica (AP) — A fire broke out on a Royal Caribbean cruise ship Wednesday as it approached Jamaica, burning one crew member and causing passengers to be sent to evacuation stations with life jackets. Royal Caribbean International said fire suppression equipment quickly doused

the blaze in a mechanical area of the Freedom of the Seas as it arrived at the Miami-based company's cruise ship port in the northern town of Falmouth. "The fire was not very big and none of the visitors had to be evacuated," Jamaica Tourism Minister Wykeham McNeill said. Video taken from the Falmouth pier showed a plume of gray smoke billowing from a section of the

towering 15-deck ship as it arrived at the \$220 million port that opened in 2011. The company said all passengers were accounted for and none were injured. One crew member was treated for a "minor, first-degree burn" and he was treated in the ship's medical facility, company spokeswoman Cynthia Martinez said.

By early afternoon, the passengers were able to "leave the ship to enjoy Falmouth," the company said on Twitter. The Associated Press was not immediately able to contact any of the passengers. Royal Caribbean said all systems were operating normally on the docked ship. The cause of the fire was not immediately

known and no other details about the investigation were available. The ship is expected to continue with its regular itinerary, with the next port call on Thursday in the Cayman Islands. The 1,112-foot Freedom of the Seas is on a seven-night cruise that departed from Port Canaveral, Florida, on Sunday. □

Bahamas: Developer's US bankruptcy won't be recognized

DAVID McFADDEN
Associated Press
KINGSTON, Jamaica (AP) — A judge in the Bahamas ruled Wednesday that a U.S. bankruptcy filing by the developer of an unfinished \$2.5 billion megaresort in Nassau will not be recognized in the Caribbean archipelago. The islands' attorney general strongly objected to the Chapter 11 filing in U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Delaware, arguing that having a U.S. court decide major economic matters in the Bahamas would have "far-reaching implications." The



In this 2011 photo, Baha Mar Resorts CEO Sarkis Izmirlian, center, participates in the groundbreaking ceremony for a Baha Mar resort in Nassau, Bahamas. In 2015, a Bahamas judge ruled that a U.S. bankruptcy filing by the developer of its unfinished megaresort will not be recognized in the archipelago, meaning the developer won't get a new loan to pay for daily operations. (AP Photo/Tim Aylen)

Baha Mar hotel-and-casino project in the islands' capital has been touted as the most expensive project ever undertaken in the Bahamas. Justice Ian Winder sided with the islands' government in a Wednesday decision, ruling that developer Baha Mar's recent U.S. Chapter 11 filing will not be extended to the Bahamas. His full written decision will be issued in the coming days. The decision means Baha Mar won't get a new loan to pay for daily operations or receive U.S. bankruptcy protection for its assets in the Bahamas.

The Baha Mar group of companies said it was disappointed in the ruling, but it is "even more disappointed in the way the government has responded to our Chapter 11 filing over the past several weeks." The Bahamas has petitioned the islands' Supreme Court to wind up Baha Mar and appoint a provisional liquidator to oversee the restructuring and opening of the repeatedly delayed resort if an out-of-court agreement can't be negotiated. A liquidator could be appointed as soon as July 31, when a hearing is scheduled. □

US serves 105 warrants in Puerto Rico drug ring crackdown

DANICA COTO
Associated Press
SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — A group of 105 people in Puerto Rico face murder, drug and weapon charges in one of the largest racketeering cases in the history of the U.S. Department of Justice, authorities said Wednesday. The suspects are suspected of running a drug-trafficking organization in the U.S. territory for nearly a decade that generated an estimated

\$82 million in profit, said U.S. Attorney Rosa Emilia Rodriguez. The group also is suspected of committing at least 28 killings in recent years, with 18 of the suspects eligible for the death penalty. "It is one of the most violent, if not the most violent, group in Puerto Rico," Rodriguez said. "Once again, Puerto Rico makes history. Unfortunately, negative history." Members of the group are

charged with selling crack, cocaine, heroin and marijuana in public housing complexes in the capital of San Juan and other nearby areas. Three of the 34 suspects arrested by early Wednesday afternoon were detained in Tampa, Florida, and another 32 were already in jail on other charges, authorities said. Some 700 federal and local agents were involved in the arrests, which began around dawn on Wednesday.

day. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and Puerto Rico police were in charge of the investigation, which began in 2011, said Felix Rios, Puerto Rico-based ATF resident agent in charge. "This has been a very important investigation for ATF," he said. "Puerto Rico can feel a little safer because we have gotten 105 extremely violent criminals off the street."

The suspects arrested went by names including "Fat Boy," "Bimbo" and "Masacre," and were part of a group known as the "Rompe ONU." It broke away in 2007 from a local drug-trafficking alliance known as the "ONU," the Spanish acronym for United Nations. The ONU was formed in 2004 to resolve conflicts among rival Puerto Rico drug gangs and protect drug sales amid a federal crackdown. □



Aruba's Premiere Residential Community: Gold Coast Enters Exciting Final Phase of Development

MALMOK - When Gold Coast broke ground in the mid 90s, local developers, Cas Bon NV., expressed their desire to make it into the premiere residential community on the island. They envisioned finely designed high quality homes and infrastructure, and later on, past the construction phase, providing high quality services compatible with five star resorts, as homes and condos become occupied. Looking back at those early days, developers note with great satisfaction that their vision translated itself



to lush landscaping. Now in its final phase of construction Gold Coast is offering a not-to-be missed opportunity with only a few lots available suitable for the construction of homes, and only a few 2/3 bedroom condos for sale in its inventory. The development, now over 80% sold out, is inviting investors to visit the gated community, and tour its condos, townhouses and luxury villas. Your dream of a home to call your own on the Island paradise of Aruba may become a reality, within the affordable premiere Resi-



into a beautiful neighborhood, populated by a satisfied and growing customer base, enhance by a sterling reputation among financial institutions. Cas Bon NV was already popular in the local market delivering afford-

able housing when it ventured into the condo and villa market with its locally financed Gold Coast project on Malmokweg, and remarkably throughout the many phases of construction, it remained true to the

original Mediterranean and Caribbean architectural master-plan, with spacious two level homes, and upscale condos, delivering on all its promises for attractive amenities, from picturesque plazas and fountains



dential Community, in prestigious Malmok, just blocks away from the scenic Northwest Coastline and the Island's most beautiful sandy white beaches and crystal waters. For quality, design, style, security and convenience, the address is Gold Coast, and hurry up as the development just recently entered its final phase. □

Turning the Tables:

Young Visitors to Aruba Cook at Carambola Restaurant!

EAGLE BEACH - Jared and Zach Regenstein have been enjoying coming to Aruba since they were young children. Their parents, who have been coming to Aruba since the 90's, were honored recently as Goodwill Ambassadors of Aruba by the Aruba Tourism Authority for visiting the island for over 20 years

consecutively! The two budding young chefs Jared and Zach cooked with the entire staff of Carambola Restaurant, their favorite of course, on their most recent visit. The dishes they prepared were Deconstructed Caesar Salad, Homemade Papperdella Pasta with Eggplants, Tomato and



Marinara Sauce, and Banana Maple Syrup Fried French Toast. Jared will be going into his first grade of high school

next year, and Zach will be going to Whitman School of Management at Syracuse University to study Finance and Entrepreneur-

ship. We wish them much success and look forward to their return visits to Aruba for many years to come! □



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At Arawak Garden:

Mike and Coco Love Salt & Pepper Aruba!

PALM BEACH - Mike and Coco from Boston, Mass, are having the time of their lives on Aruba.

They love the friendly people, the relaxed vibes on the island and the great restaurants.

One of those great restaurants is Salt & Pepper, which they discovered when they walked past the Arawak Garden. The Garden offers nightly live music, night shopping in the kiosks and several wonder-

ful restaurants as well as the Sopranos Piano Bar. For Coco and Mike it was not difficult to make a choice when they were



presented with the menu: they both chose the red snapper and were not sorry at all. Now all the couple needs

to do is enjoy their vacation a few days more and come back soon, please. At Salt & Pepper they are waiting for you! □

Fredericks Family Honored at the Playa Linda Resort



PALM BEACH - Recently Richard and Sharon Fredericks were recently honored as Distinguished Visitors of the island of Aruba after visiting for more than 13 years consecutive. The symbolic honorary title is presented in the name



of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for between 10-and-20 years consecutive. Mr. Ricardo Croes representing Aruba Tourism Authority conducted the ceremony at the Playa Linda Resort. Sharon commented that she will never change her vacation island for any

other island. The top reasons for returning are they consider Aruba to be the 'Happy Island,' the great weather, the friendly Aruban hospitality, the white sand beaches and the local food. In the pictures are Mr. Ricardo Croes from ATA, together with Richard and Sharon, and also Yvette from the Playa Linda Resort. □

Catch your own dinner with Driftwood! Motto at Driftwood Restaurant: "from the pier to your plate!"



ORANJESTAD - The downtown marina is home of Driftwood Fishing Charters, the successful fisherman of the established seafood restaurant Driftwood in Oranjestad. Driftwood owner Herby

Merryweather has a love and passion for fishing. A fisherman who knows about fish, what our local waters have to offer, and what the words "fresh seafood" really mean. What Herby catches will be served in his restaurant on the same day. Herby loves to share his fishing passion with the many visitors to the island. His fleet of a 35ft. Twin Engine Bertram yacht and a 50ft. Twin Engine Post yacht, appropriately called "Driftwood I and II, is available for charters on 12 noon and from 1pm to 5pm.



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Driftwood Restaurant. This authentic Aruban seafood restaurant is located in characteristic downtown Oranjestad. Their

extended menu has been jubled by many. Driftwood offers daily specials, as well as a delicious 4-course menu for just \$25.95 **Charter deep sea fishing rates:** \$400 - 1/2 day • \$760 - full day. Rates per boat Max. 6 people. **Driftwood Restaurant** Authentic Aruban Seafood Restaurant; Klipstraat #12, Downtown Oranjestad. Tel: (297) 583 2515 www.driftwoodaruba.com Open hours: every day, from 5pm till 10:30pm. Sunday Closed.

The Tropicana Casino Aruba is Better Than Ever!

EAGLE BEACH - The Tropicana Casino was completely remodeled earlier this year for your enjoyment, offering new carpets, tables and chairs, a hug new bar, a super modern kitchen to new associates uniforms.

The building is totally renovated at a cost of just over one million, painted Ultra Marine Blue on the outside and has a modern spacious industrial look inside. The slots floor has been increased with 20% and our manpower staffing has been increased with 50%. For their members and guests the Tropicana Club & Casino Aruba has some big news to share:

In 2015 you can expect a great deal more from your "Trop Advantage® card". How much more? Well, let's just say you're really

going places. Once you achieve Gold, Platinum or Black Card status, you will receive a complimentary three-night stay at The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas and set sail with Carnival Cruise Lines® for up to eight days! Bon voyage!

"Double Down Sports Bar & Grill" is a casual restaurant featuring a variety of boldly flavored, made-to-order menu items. The restaurant created an inviting neighborhood atmosphere that includes an extensive multi-media system, a full bar and an open layout, which appeals to both sports fans and families. The helpful and always smiling staff members offer great service in an inviting atmosphere. The restaurant serves multiple uses; for example work-day lunch, dinner with the

family, watching the big games, late-night cravings and room service for the hotel guest, beach tennis guests and take-out and soon breakfast. You will be able to will be eat & drink while you watch your favorite sport or games. One unique feature is that every single eating booth has its own monitor. So, no matter where you sit, you will never miss out watching your favorite team play!

The Tropicana Casino also offers a variety of theme nights. To mention just a few: Bingo, Ladies night, Local night, seniors day, Double points nights and new to Aruba: Friday Men's Night.

To find out the complete weeks schedule, stop by to try your luck, watch a game or have a drink and a bite.



Carmen & Mandy Are Crazy About Tango Argentine Grill

PALM BEACH - They call it 'the most beautiful island on earth' and they are enjoying every minute of their holiday: Carmen and Mandy, friends and co-workers from Holland. The two are from Haarlem, working at an Ikea branch. As they are such good friends, they decided to book a 2-week holiday together and they chose Aruba. What a good move! Before long they discovered that they are crazy about Aruba's beaches during the day; in the evenings they were looking for exceptional res-



taurants. And so they happened to walk past the popular Arawak Garden one evening: Tango Argentine Grill's menu was so inviting, that they decided to check it out.

After a dinner of traditional loin ribs, served with steamed vegetables and oven-roasted potatoes plus a side order of fries with mayonnaise (of course) and a good glass of wine, Carmen and Mandy decided that they had come home for real. They started chatting to the staffers,

sipping their cappuccinos and Heineken beers and before everyone knew it, they were fast friends, vowing to come back soon to pick up where they left.

These gorgeous girls from Holland will always be most welcome at Tango, which is located across from the Occidental Resort on the hi-rise strip.

At Arawak Garden you will find five great restaurants, nightly live music, small shops and a piano bar.

Hope to see you soon, Carmen and Mandy! ☐



United States' Tom Watson gestures to the crowd after finishing on the 18th green during the second round of the British Open Golf Championship at the Old Course, St. Andrews, Scotland, Friday, July 17, 2015.

Associated Press

Tom Watson looks for 4th title at Senior British Open

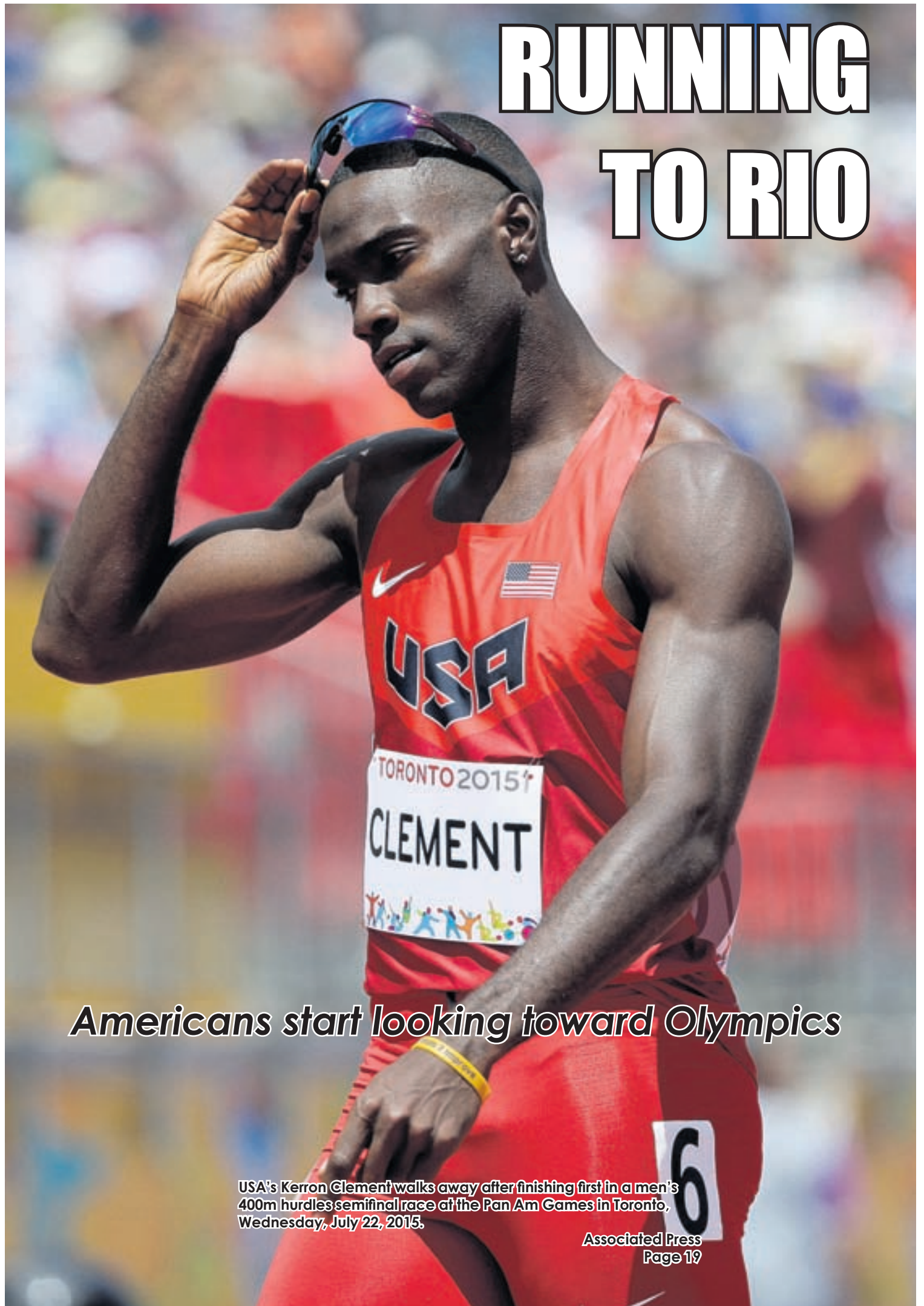
SUNNINGDALE, England (AP) — Less than a week after his emotional farewell to the British Open at St. Andrews, Tom Watson is going for a record fourth title in the Senior British Open on the Old Course at Sunningdale.

The 65-year-old Watson won the event at Turnberry in 2003, Royal Aberdeen in 2005 and Muirfield in 2007.

"I've had a hard look at the course and remembered some of the things that you need to have in your arsenal to play this course," Watson said Wednesday. "I have to go through a lot of players to win, and it would be extra special at my age."

"I hope on Sunday night you are asking me the question: 'How does it feel to be Senior Open champion for the fourth time?'"

Continued on Page 18



USA's Kerron Clement walks away after finishing first in a men's 400m hurdles semifinal race at the Pan Am Games in Toronto, Wednesday, July 22, 2015.

Associated Press
Page 19

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British Open

Continued from Page 17

Watson missed the cut last week in his final appearance in the British Open. He won the major championship five times.

Bernhard Langer strolled to a Champions Tour-record 13-shot victory on the fast hard links at Royal Porthcawl in South Wales last year, and the U.S.-based German is among the favorites this time.

With conditions on the heathland course on the outskirts of London much the same as last July for the start of this year's championship, Langer begins his title defense Thursday alongside Miguel Angel Jimenez and Fred Couples, the 2012 winner at Turnberry.

Langer, who played all four rounds at St. Andrews last week, considers his game to be in good shape.

"I think I'm fairly close," he said. "There's always im-



United States' Tom Watson follows a drive from the 7th tee during the second round of the British Open Golf Championship at the Old Course, St. Andrews, Scotland, Friday, July 17, 2015.

Associated Press

provement possible here and there. But it's not far away. Just trying to keep it in play and avoid mistakes and hopefully make tons of

birdies."

The tournament is the last of the Champions Tour's five majors. Jeff Maggert won the U.S. Senior Open and

Regions Tradition, Langer took the Senior Players Championship, and Colin Montgomerie the Senior PGA Championship.

Watson will play alongside Montgomerie and Maggert.

"I know my way around here as much as anyone," Montgomerie said. "I do perhaps have an advantage of knowing the course. But the standard of play is extremely high, a hair's breadth from the PGA Tour itself, and most of the top seniors are here."

Also in the field is Loren Roberts,

winner at Turnberry in 2006 and Sunningdale in 2009, the only other time the Berkshire course staged the Senior Open. Others include Russ Cochran, winner at Walton Heath in 2011, and Mark Wiebe, who beat Langer in a playoff at Royal Birkdale in 2013.

Langer more than made up for that defeat with his performance last year at Porthcawl, posting rounds of 65-66-68-67 for an 18-under total of 266, with Montgomerie a distant second at 279.



Americans start looking toward Rio as Pan Am Games wind down

STEPHEN WADE
AP Sports Writer

TORONTO (AP) — Alan Ashley isn't paying attention to the medal table at the Pan Am Games, but the American will be riveted to it at next year's Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

Ashley, the chief of sport performance for the United States Olympic Committee, is working the Pan Am Games like a laboratory: trying out younger athletes, giving many their first taste of a large multi-sport event, and using the 41-nation championships to qualify some athletes for Rio.

"I feel an enormous amount of pressure to deliver for the athletes," Ashley said Wednesday in an interview with The Associated Press. "It's their show, they're the ones out there competing. But we've got to do everything within our power to make sure they have their very best day."

The United States is expected to top the medal table when the Pan Am Games end Sunday, probably just ahead of host Canada. The Americans have won twice as many medals as



Gold medalist Queen Harrison of the United States, center, silver medalist Tenaya Jones of the United States, left, and bronze medalist Nikkita Holder of Canada pose for photos during the medal ceremony for the women's 110 meter hurdles at the Pan Am Games Wednesday, July 22, 2015, in Toronto.

Associated Press

anyone else in the 64-year history of the event, so the outcome was expected before the games opened in Canada's largest city. Now eyes turn to Brazil, and expectations soar.

It's still early, so Ashley declined to make predictions. However, several widely

circulated forecasts show the United States as a slight favorite to finish ahead of China with Russia in third. Ashley said prospects for Rio will be clearer after the world swimming championships opening this week in Russia, and the track and field world championships

in August in Beijing.

"After the world championships, everybody will have a better idea of how their countries are stacked up against each other," Ashley said.

The United States won the most gold medals in London with 46, and also led

the overall count. China had 38 gold and was second overall. Host nation Brazil won only 17 overall medals — only three gold — and is hoping to use the home-nation advantage and win about 30.

"I think China will be really solid, and I wouldn't discount Russia," Ashley said. "The best I can tell you is that it's probably similar to London and the horse race that went on there."

The United States needs to maintain its dominance in swimming and track and field, and improve in events like sailing and equestrian, which failed to produce medals in London.

The Americans will be strong in golf, which is returning to the Olympics since its last appearance in 1904 in St. Louis. The men's field could include the likes of defending Masters and U.S. Open champion Jordan Spieth, Bubba Watson, Dustin Johnson and Rickie Fowler.

The Americans are also hopeful in rugby sevens, another new sport with a wide-open field for both men and women. □

Silver has 'no doubt' NBA could see a female head coach

BRIAN MAHONEY
AP Basketball Writer

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — Adam Silver has "no doubt" the NBA could see a day when Becky Hammon or another woman is a head coach. The commissioner said Wednesday he had texted and emailed with Hammon while they were in Las Vegas, where she coached the Spurs to the Summer League championship Monday night. He praised the San Antonio organiza-

tion for hiring her last season as the first full-time female assistant in the NBA and putting her in charge of its entry in the Vegas league.

"No different than for me in coming up in my career, unless you're given those opportunities, you're never going to show your ability to be successful," Silver said. "So I'm enormously proud of her and I'm enormously proud of the players who've quickly seen that

she's a top-notch coach and have been willing to follow her."

Hammon is a former WNBA star who had been hired by Spurs coach Gregg Popovich last summer before ending her playing career in San Antonio. The Spurs lost their first game, then won the rest before beating Phoenix on Monday for the title. Silver had already returned from Las Vegas but watched the game on NBA TV. □



Becky Hammon coaches the San Antonio Spurs during an NBA summer league basketball game against the New York Knicks on Saturday, July 11, 2015, in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

NL Capsules

Choo hits for the cycle as Rangers rout Rockies 9-0

The Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — Shin-Soo Choo hit for the cycle, Matt Harrison earned his first win in 14 months and the Texas Rangers routed the Colorado Rockies 9-0 on Tuesday night.

Delino DeShields had a career-high four hits and Prince Fielder homered for the Rangers, who won for only the third time in 13 games.

Choo, who had three RBIs, doubled in the second inning, homered in the fourth and singled in the fifth. He completed the cycle with a triple to center leading off the ninth.

It was the eighth cycle in franchise history and first since Alex Rios did it on Sept. 23, 2013, against Houston.

Harrison (1-1) allowed seven hits in six innings.

Rockies starter Kyle Kendrick (3-11) was charged with 10 hits and six runs in 4 1/3 innings.

CUBS 5, REDS 4, 13 INNINGS

CINCINNATI (AP) — Kyle Schwarber hit a tying two-run homer in the ninth inning, then completed yet another big night at Great American Ball Park with a solo shot in the 13th, rallying the Cubs to the road win.

Schwarber's homer off Nate Adcock (1-2) gave the rookie his first two-homer game, right in the ballpark where he grew up rooting for the Reds. He finally got to play at Great American in the All-Star Futures game nine days ago and won the MVP award with a two-run triple.

Jason Motte (7-1) allowed three hits in two innings. Justin Grimm pitched the 13th for his second save in three chances.

Cincinnati's Todd Frazier had another big game, driving in three runs with a sacrifice fly and a tiebreaking two-run single in the seventh inning.

BRAVES 4, DODGERS 3

ATLANTA (AP) — Chris Johnson drove in two runs for Atlanta, and Alex Wood overcame control problems on a hot night.

The Braves, who had lost seven of nine overall, improved to 18-6 at home in games decided by two



Texas Rangers' Shin-Soo Choo circles the bases after hitting a solo home run off Colorado Rockies starting pitcher Kyle Kendrick to lead off the fourth inning of a baseball game Tuesday, July 21, 2015, in Denver.

runs or fewer.

It was a tough evening for the NL West-leading Dodgers, who have lost consecutive games for the first time since June 22-23 at the Chicago Cubs. Los Angeles starter Brett Anderson left the game in the third after irritating his left Achilles tendon.

Wood (7-6) threw just 59 of his 107 pitches for strikes, but was charged with three runs and six hits in 6 2/3 innings. Jim Johnson pitched the ninth for his eighth save in 11 chances.

Justin Turner and Yasiel Puig homered for Los Angeles. Chin-hui Tsao (1-1) got the loss.

METS 7, NATIONALS 2

WASHINGTON (AP) — Pinch-hitter Eric Campbell put New York ahead with his two-run single in the seventh inning, leading the Mets to the victory.

Fresh off his dominant display in the All-Star Game a week ago, Jacob deGrom (10-6) allowed two runs and three hits in six innings.

He struck out eight in his first win over the division-rival Nationals in four tries.

Campbell was batting for deGrom when he knocked in Wilmer Flores and Kirk Nieuwenhuis to give New York a 3-2 lead.

Wilson Ramos hit a two-run homer for Washington, which leads the NL East by two games over the Mets. Joe Ross (2-2) gave up three runs — two earned — and four hits in 6 1/3 innings.

RAYS 1, PHILLIES 0

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Nathan Karns homered and pitched five innings for Tampa Bay, ruining the major league debut of Philadelphia's Aaron Nola.

Karns (5-5) allowed three hits and walked two, helping the Rays win for just the third time in their last 13 road games. The right-hander also bounced back from his last outing on July 9 when he allowed career highs of seven runs and nine hits in an 8-3 loss at Kansas City.

Nola (0-1) gave up five hits

in six innings, but the Phillies managed just four hits. The 22-year-old Nola was the seventh overall selection by the Phillies in the 2014 draft, making him the first Philadelphia player since Pat Combs in 1989 to appear in the big leagues a year after being drafted. The Phillies had won four in a row.

Brad Boxberger pitched the ninth for his 24th save.

BREWERS 8, INDIANS 1

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Matt Garza pitched six shutout innings for Milwaukee in his return from the disabled list, and Jean Segura hit a two-run homer for his first extra-base hit in more than six weeks.

Garza (5-10) scattered six hits, walked two and struck out four.

Milwaukee has won four consecutive games and 17 of 23 but remains in last place in the NL Central. Cleveland has lost four of six. Indians right-hander Danny Salazar (8-5) struck out eight in six innings. He

allowed three runs, two hits and walked three.

MARLINS 3, DIAMONDBACKS 0

PHOENIX (AP) — Mat Latos allowed four hits through seven innings in his third straight strong start and Miami snapped a four-game losing streak.

Michael Morse homered off Jeremy Hellickson (6-6) in the Diamondbacks' seventh loss in their last eight games. Adeiny Hechavarria and Christian Yelich each had an RBI single.

Latos (4-6) struck out seven, matching his season high for the second straight game, and walked one. The 6-foot-6 right-hander has allowed a combined three runs over his last three starts — a span of 20 innings. In his previous outing, he gave up one run and one hit in seven innings but took the loss against the Cubs in Chicago.

A.J. Pollock singled twice for the Diamondbacks. The other hits off Latos were a single by Paul Goldschmidt and an infield single by Yasmany Tomas.

GIANTS 9, PADRES 3

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Rookie Chris Heston took a no-hitter into the sixth inning and Hector Sanchez hit an impressive grand slam for one of three San Francisco home runs.

Heston, who no-hit the New York Mets on June 9, allowed one hit and faced just two over the minimum in 7 1/3 innings. He received a standing ovation from the many Giants fans in the stands above the third-base dugout when he was pulled by manager Bruce Bochy after issuing a one-out walk in the seventh. He struck out six and walked two.

Heston and two relievers combined on a four-hitter. The Padres scored three unearned runs in the ninth. Heston (10-5) didn't allow a hit until Melvin Upton Jr.'s broken-bat, bloop single over the outstretched glove of second baseman Joe Panik leading off the sixth. San Diego's Odrisamer Despaigne (3-7) allowed six runs and seven hits in five-plus innings, struck out one and walked two. □

Brendan Ryan gets big hit in Yankees' 3-2 win over Orioles

The Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Little-used Brendan Ryan hit a tiebreaking RBI double in the sixth inning, helping the Yankees get the win.

Alex Rodriguez hit a sacrifice fly off Wei-Yin Chen (4-6), and Chase Headley added an RBI double as New York moved 10 games over .500 (51-41) for the first time since Sept. 13, 2013.

Center fielder Jacoby Ellsbury made an over-the-shoulder catch with a runner on second in the seventh to preserve the win for Justin Wilson (3-0). Andrew Miller got three outs for his 21st save in 21 chances.

New York opened a five-game lead in the division over Baltimore, which fell to .500 at 46-46.

Adam Jones had two hits for the Orioles, and Chen allowed 10 hits in 6 1/3 innings on his 30th birthday.

ROYALS 3, PIRATES 1

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Jarrod Dyson hit a two-run single in the eighth inning to lead Kansas City to the victory.

Dyson scored later in the inning on Alcides Escobar's single, and the Royals won for the 11th time in 14

games.

Wade Davis (6-1) got the win. Greg Holland survived a shaky ninth, allowing a run on four hits and a walk, but struck out Gregory Polanco with the bases loaded for his 21st save in 24 opportunities.

Pirates starter Gerrit Cole (13-4), who leads the majors in victories, was charged with three runs and five hits in 7 1/3 innings.

ASTROS 8, RED SOX 3

HOUSTON (AP) — Chris Carter hit a two-run homer, rookie Carlos Correa drove in two runs and Houston handed Boston its sixth straight loss.

Rookie Vince Velasquez (1-1) pitched six innings of three-run ball for his first career win in his seventh major league start. He was recalled from Double-A Corpus Christi on Tuesday. The Astros rallied with four runs in the fifth, and Carter's 16th homer made it 7-3 in the sixth. Carter returned to the lineup after missing two games with a sprained right ankle.

Boston starter Brian Johnson (0-1) allowed three hits and four runs with four walks in 4 1/3 innings in his major



New York Yankees' Didi Gregorius slides safely across the plate ahead of the throw to Baltimore Orioles catcher Matt Wieters during the sixth inning of a baseball game, Tuesday, July 21, 2015, in New York. Gregorius scored on a double by Brendan Ryan.

league debut. He was 8-6 with a 2.73 ERA in 16 starts at Triple-A Pawtucket.

MARINERS 11, TIGERS 9

DETROIT (AP) — Franklin Gutierrez's pinch-hit grand slam in the eighth inning, sending Seattle to the win. The Tigers had come back from a 5-1 deficit and led 8-6 when Neftali Feliz (1-3) allowed five runs in the eighth. Feliz, who was picked up by Detroit on July 11 after refusing a minor league assignment from Texas, allowed a run on a wild pitch before giving up Gutierrez's opposite-field drive. There was no activity in the Detroit bullpen as Seattle rallied.

Joe Beimel (1-1) earned the win, and Carson Smith got four outs for his eighth save.

Seattle's Nelson Cruz and Detroit's J.D. Martinez each hit long home runs to center field in the third.

Yoenis Cespedes and Nick Castellanos also connected for the Tigers.

CARDINALS 8, WHITE SOX 5 CHICAGO (AP) — Matt Holliday hit his sixth career grand slam, powering Michael Wacha and the Cardinals to the road win.

Holliday homered for the first time since May 12. He returned last Friday after missing 31 games because of a strained right quadri-

ceps.

Mark Reynolds added a solo shot in the fifth for St. Louis.

Wacha (11-3) gave up five runs in five innings. Trevor Rosenthal pitched the ninth for his 28th save in 30 chances.

White Sox rookie Tyler Saladino homered for the second straight game. Geovany Soto also connected for Chicago, and Carlos Rodon (3-3) was tagged for seven runs in four innings.

BLUE JAYS 7, ATHLETICS 1 OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Russell Martin, Jose Bautista and Edwin Encarnacion homered to power Toronto. □

Feds end prosecution of Barry Bonds without conviction

PAUL ELIAS

SUDHIN THANAWALA

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — After a nearly decade-long doping prosecution, Barry Bonds emerged victorious on Tuesday when federal prosecutors dropped what was left of their criminal case against the Major League Baseball home runs leader.

The government's pursuit of Bonds ended quietly with a one-paragraph motion by the U.S. Department of Justice announcing Solicitor General Donald B. Verrilli Jr. will not ask the U.S. Supreme Court to review the appellate decision that overturned Bonds' obstruc-

tion of justice conviction.

A jury found the former San Francisco Giants star guilty in 2011 for giving a meandering answer to a federal grand jury in 2003, when asked whether his personal trainer gave him anything that required a syringe for self-injection. An 11-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals overturned that conviction in April, and the government had until Wednesday to file for a Supreme Court review.

The jury deadlocked on three counts accusing Bonds of making false statements when he denied receiving steroids or human growth hormone

or any substance that required a syringe for self-injection from the trainer, Greg Anderson.

The government dismissed those counts in August 2011, and the 9th Circuit barred a retrial on the obstruction charge, citing double jeopardy.

"The finality of today's decision gives me great peace," Bonds, who turns 51 on Friday, said in a statement. "I am relieved, humbled and thankful for what this means for me and my family."

Major League Baseball had no immediate comment. The U.S. Attorney's office in San Francisco didn't immediately respond to a phone



In this Tuesday, Aug. 7, 2007, file photo, San Francisco Giants Barry Bonds celebrates after his 756th career home run in the fifth inning of a baseball game against the Washington Nationals in San Francisco.

Associated Press

call seeking comment. Bonds' legal victory is unlikely to win over critics who concluded he cheated

by using performance-enhancing drugs, or help him with Hall of Fame voters.

In his third year on the Hall ballot in 2015, Bonds received 202 votes for 36.8 percent from the Baseball Writers' Association of America.

A player must garner at least 75 percent of the vote to be elected.

But it brings to a close one of the most high-profile prosecutions to emerge from an investigation of the Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative that began in 2002 and saw the convictions of Olympic track gold medalist Marion Jones, elite sprint cyclist Tammy Thomas. □

What goes up also goes down, but Froome keeps Tour lead

JAMEY KEATEN

Associated Press

PRA LOUP, France (AP) —

The speedometer clocked between 50 and 60 kilometers per hour (30-37 mph) as the pine trees whipped by, and the riders leaned left to right and back again to negotiate the snaking, bumpy descent.

Winning the Tour de France isn't only about having the ability to get uphill fast. You've got to have nerves of steel going downhill too. Chris Froome proved Wednesday that he's got both.

The 30-year-old Briton retained the leader's yellow jersey as the Tour sped toward its crescendo in the Alps.

The 17th stage included a harrowing 16-kilometer (10-mile) descent that dealt perhaps the final blow to Alberto Contador's distant hope of a third Tour victory and doused the ambitions of promising French rider Thibaut Pinot for a stage win. They both lost time after hitting the asphalt on the way down from the treacherous Allos Pass.

Germany's Simon Geschke won the stage by surging out of a breakaway bunch and keeping at bay Andrew Talansky of the U.S., who was second, by 32 seconds at the end of the 161-kilometer (100-mile) ride from Digne-Les-Bains



Germany's Simon Geschke celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the seventeenth stage of the Tour de France cycling race over 161 kilometers (100 miles) with start in Digne-les-Bains and finish in Pra Loup, France, Wednesday, July 22, 2015.

Associated Press

to Pra Loup ski resort.

Fellow American Tejay van Garderen, who was third overall as the stage began, pulled out of the race with a headache and a lack of energy after fighting a respiratory infection for several days.

"It almost feels like I just want to disappear right now," said a despondent Van Garderen. "It was hard to look my teammates in the eyes (and) it was hard to call my wife and explain to her what was going on." Froome, meanwhile, emerged unscathed in the first of four punishing days in the Alps, staving off multiple attacks from his top rivals. He showed great

bike-handling skill on the Allos descent, where he whizzed in single-file with three of them, each kicking out knees on the twisting, narrow bends.

Geschke was first down the slope, having ridden off ahead with 50 kilometers (30 miles) still to go. Pinot hit the deck when his wheels slipped from under him on a left-hand bend.

"It was really challenging," said Geschke, whose stage victory was the fifth by a German on this Tour, and ideal for an event that is back on public TV in Germany after a hiatus of several years because of doping scandals that tarnished the sport's image.

"The best day of my life as a rider," he said of his win. Contador hit a hole and crashed in the downhill section, tearing his shorts. The 2007 and 2009 champion was forced to swap bikes with teammate Peter Sagan, and rode in more than two minutes after Froome.

"My wheel slipped and I fell. We tried to fix my bike but it wasn't working and I took Peter's bike," Contador said. "I tried to descend as well as I could, but at the bottom of the climb I had to change back to one of my own bikes to minimize the losses."

While the Spaniard stays in fifth place, the Tinkoff-Saxo leader who was hoping to add the Tour to his Giro d'Italia win in May is now a substantial 6 minutes and 40 seconds behind the Team Sky rider overall — and all but out of contention.

Froome and Nairo Quintana sprinted together for the line, with the Colombian just beating the Briton this time. Quintana remains second overall — still 3:10 behind Froome — but was very active over the day's five climbs, testing Froome with bursts of speed that the 2013 Tour winner was forced to match.

With time running out for podium contenders to claw back a few minutes,

Froome is expecting more attacks in the next three days of progressively harder Alpine climbing before the largely ceremonial ride on the Champs-Élysées in Paris on Sunday.

"My rivals are going to take bigger risks," Froome said. "We are seeing an all-or-nothing approach."

The descent wasn't unknown to Froome. He'd previously raced and trained on it and that inside knowledge helped him negotiate the bends.

"I have never felt that descending has really been a weakness for me. I have always been quite comfortable on the descents," he said.

Alejandro Valverde of Spain, Quintana's Movistar teammate who has been riding strongly, rose from fourth to third overall, 4:09 behind Froome. Froome's Sky teammate Geraint Thomas climbed from sixth to fourth, vaulting over Contador, and is 6:34 behind his team leader.

Riding solo for over an hour from such a long way out, up the two final climbs and alone down the descent was risky. But Geschke said he knew that other riders in his group were stronger climbers, so he decided to shake them off as early as he could.

"I took the only chance I had," he said. □



FC Barcelona's Luis Suarez, left, shoots to score as he is defended by Los Angeles Galaxy's Dan Gargan during the first half of an International Champions Cup soccer match Tuesday, July 21, 2015, in Pasadena, Calif.

Associated Press

GREG BEACHAM

AP Sports Writer

PASADENA, Calif. (AP) —

The record Rose Bowl crowd of 93,226 largely wore scarlet and blue, chanting and cheering on

mighty Barcelona's solid season-opening performance against the LA Galaxy.

By the final minutes, many of those same fans were roaring for the local team's

Barcelona beats LA Galaxy 2-1 before record Rose Bowl crowd

reserves as they stayed competitive with a European superpower.

Luis Suarez scored in the 45th minute, and Barcelona opened its U.S. pre-season tour with a 2-1 victory over the defending MLS champions Tuesday night.

Sergi Roberto also scored in the 56th minute as the UEFA Champions League winners largely controlled their first match of the new year, delighting the biggest crowd for a club soccer game involving an MLS team in U.S. history.

"Considering we've only

practiced about seven days and had a lot of traveling, overall I come away with a good sensation," Barcelona coach Luis Enrique said through a translator. "I'm happy with the way the team played overall. The intensity was similar to what we've seen in practice."

The record crowd largely supported Barcelona despite the absence of Lionel Messi and Neymar, who stayed home from the International Champions Cup tour to stay fresh for the games that count. Dani Alves and Claudio Bravo

also were unavailable because of the Gold Cup.

Yet the Galaxy took consolation in a solid effort despite missing several of their own regulars — and their second-half lineup filled with youngsters even got a goal. Tommy Meyer scored on a header off a pass from Mika Vayrynen late in second-half injury time, denying Barcelona of a clean sheet.

"I'm really speechless to be able to play on the same field with such great professional athletes, people I've watched on TV for so long," said Ariel Lassiter. □

Even Apple loyalists taking their time on Apple Watch

BARBARA ORTUTAY

AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — For all those who hailed the iPhone as the “Jesus Phone” in 2007, the Apple Watch’s arrival has hardly been the second coming. Sure, it can do many useful, even delightful things, such as showing incoming texts and email, tracking heart rates during exercise or sending digital doodles to friends. But is that enough to spend \$350 or more, especially when it requires wearing a watch again while still carrying an iPhone around?

Early Apple Watch owners seem generally happy with it, but Apple’s bigger worry should be those on the sidelines — even hardcore Apple fans, not to mention everybody else — who are waiting to take the plunge. The wait-and-see attitude is not exactly helping investor sentiment. Apple hasn’t released Apple Watch sales figures, but the company’s quarterly financial report Tuesday suggests that they were lower than many Wall Street analysts expected, though Apple said they exceeded internal projections. A bigger worry for investors: iPhone sales, which at \$31 billion account for more than half of Apple’s business.

iPhone sales are still growing rapidly, but the pace of growth is slowing. Worries about the iPhone’s momentum sent Apple’s stock down nearly 5 percent, knocking about \$36 billion off the company’s market capitalization.

Among people holding off on the watch, some say they are waiting for early kinks to be worked out and others, for an “aha moment.”

“It’s been cast as a want, not a need,” said Matt Quick, a Topeka, Kansas, engineer and Apple fan who is holding off on getting one. “I’m kind of waiting to see what next year’s model will bring.”

Patrick Clayton, who has had Mac computers all his life and owns an iPhone and several iPads, returned his Apple Watch after three



In this April 10, 2015, file photo, a customer tries on an Apple Watch at an Apple Store in Hong Kong.

Associated Press

weeks. The last straw? It nagged the physically active New Yorker to stand up during a six-hour flight.

“Apple is famous for telling us what we need before we need them,” Clayton said. “I thought this would be the case with the watch. But it (just) added something to my life that I didn’t need added.”

That’s not to say the Apple Watch is a bomb. For one, it’s too soon to tell. Expectations are so high that it’s easy to forget, as Apple said, that the watch actually sold better in its first 9 weeks than the iPhone and the iPad did when those came out.

Most analysts and tech reviewers, including The Associated Press, see promise, especially compared with rival smartwatches from Samsung and others. Wristly, a research company created to study the watch, found that early buyers are overwhelmingly satisfied, more so than with the original iPad and iPhone.

And of the more than a dozen early Apple Watch owners interviewed by the AP by phone, email or in person, most of them love their watch. After all, early adopters of new technologies tend to understand that what they’re getting isn’t perfect.

“I’d recommend it to people with an open mind,” said Dennis Falkenstein of Danville, California. He said the watch gets him “everything I want” such as local temperature, or the current

time in Japan, where many of his business clients are.

But even so, there’s a long wish list, including smarter apps. Apple is already addressing some of this with a software update this fall. Falkenstein would also like to see the battery life improve from the 18 hours that’s currently promised.

Apple has run television commercials showing the watch in everyday life, and it has devoted tables at its retail stores for people to try one on and learn more.

Connected wirelessly to an iPhone, the Apple Watch isn’t meant to replace the phone, but rather provide tidbits of information readily while the phone is in a pocket or purse. There’s no keyboard, so searches and messages are done by voice dictation or the selection of a canned response. You can also send doodles and emoji.

David Lubarsky, a Fairfield, Connecticut, photographer, loves that he can get “basic information, quick” and avoid staring at Facebook on the phone all day. It lets him see texts, emails, calendar appointments and baseball scores.

But he gets frustrated when using it to pay for coffee at Starbucks.

“Your wrist doesn’t necessarily twist to the right position to the scanner so it’s pretty awkward,” he said.

Apple Watch also doesn’t always provide the right information at the right time. The watch version of one transit app offers bus schedules for your saved

locations — even if they are far away — rather than the stops closest to you at the moment, as the phone app does. As for message notifications, it’s great when it’s from someone you want to hear from — but annoying when it’s not.

It’ll take time for apps to anticipate what users need most.

Apps will get better when Apple updates the watch’s software this fall to permit more “native” apps — those that aren’t just extensions of phone apps. Some apps could even work without the phone nearby, including games, audio recorders and tools that analyze golf swings.

Apple also needs to ensure that the watch gets the types of essential “killer apps” that propelled the iPhone into an extension of ourselves. For now, it’s sometimes easier to just pull out the phone, and there’s no app you absolutely need the watch for. With phones, you now have maps, cameras and other essentials.

It might be hard to remember, but the first iPhone in 2007 was just a little more than a phone. Apps from outside companies didn’t come until Apple launched its app store the following year — with just 500 apps. Now, it has more than a million. At first, iPhone apps were dumbed-down versions of websites. Now many apps, such as Instagram, do more than what’s possible over Web browsers. Apple Watch doesn’t subject owners to ridicule the way Google Glass had, yet it’s still, in essence, a computer on your wrist. Yes, the Apple Watch comes in multiple sizes, materials and bands — 54 configurations in all — and other companies sell additional bands. But the watch isn’t stylish enough for everyone and won’t match every outfit. The watch could ultimately be more than just a Rolex for the tech-savvy set. But for that to happen, Apple needs to show how the benefits of wearing a watch outweigh the hassles of wearing a watch. □

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American Express tops second-quarter profit forecasts

KEN SWEET

AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — American Express Co.'s second-quarter profits fell 5 percent from a year ago, but the results still solidly beat analysts' estimates. A strong U.S. dollar weighed on the company's international operations once again.

The New York-based company said it earned \$1.44 billion after payments to preferred shareholders, down from \$1.52 billion the same period a year ago. On a per share basis, AmEx had net income of \$1.42 per share. The results beat Wall Street expectations. The average estimate of 15

analysts surveyed by Zacks Investment Research was for earnings of \$1.33 per share. The credit card issuer and global payments company had revenue of \$8.28 billion in the period, missing analyst forecasts. Nine analysts surveyed by Zacks expected \$8.39 billion. The amount of money

spent on American Express' namesake cards, which is a closely watched metric for the company, rose in the U.S. but fell sharply internationally. U.S. card member spending rose 6 percent to \$144.1 billion, while international spending fell 12 percent to \$30 billion. A stronger dollar makes

goods purchased internationally worth less when their local-currency price is converted to dollars. AmEx is particularly exposed to currency fluctuations when U.S. customers buy products internationally when they travel, but their accounts are denominated in dollars. □

Technology shares lead a slump in US stocks; Apple sinks

ALEX VEIGA

AP Business Writer

U.S. stocks notched their second decline in as many days Wednesday, pulled down by a technology stock slump headlined by Apple and Microsoft.

Both companies delivered disappointing quarterly results or outlooks the night before, setting the stage for the sell-off in the technology sector.

"Apple is the biggest publicly traded company in the world, so it's going to have a big impact on the indices," noted Erik Davidson, chief investment officer at Wells Fargo Private Bank.

The slide wasn't that broad, however. Financial and utilities stocks were among the big gainers. And homebuilders got a boost from a report indicating U.S. home sales surged last month to the fastest pace in more than eight years.

The Dow Jones industrial average slid 68.25 points, or 0.4 percent, to 17,851.04. The Standard & Poor's 500 index lost 5.06 points, or 0.2 percent, to 2,114.15.

The Nasdaq composite shed 36.35 points, or 0.7 percent, to 5,171.77. The tech-heavy index, which hit a new high on Monday, remains the best-performing index for the year. It's

The major stock indexes declined from the get-go as traders reacted to weaker showings late Tuesday from Microsoft, Yahoo and Apple.

Yahoo posted a nearly \$22

pense of \$8.4 billion related to its purchase of the Nokia phone business over a year ago. The stock lost \$1.74 to \$45.54.

Apple fared the worst, shedding 4.2 percent after management gave a cautious outlook for the current quarter and didn't provide much detail on how the company's new smartwatch was doing. Apple's latest results also stirred investor concerns about a slowdown in the growth of iPhone sales. The stock fell \$5.53 to 125.22.

Despite its size, Apple's latest results don't necessarily speak to the overall health of the economy or corporate America, Davidson said.

"Do iPhone sales tell us a lot about the broader economy and the markets or does it tell us more about Apple? It probably tells us more about Apple," Davidson said. "In general, you have a U.S. economy that is recovering. Earnings are going fairly well."

Several other companies, including consumer re-

views service Angie's List, Tupperware Brands and Packaging Corp. of America reported earnings or revenue that fell short of Wall Street's expectations. Whirlpool and Chipotle Mexican Grill were among the companies whose earnings impressed investors Wednesday.

Shares in Whirlpool vaulted \$12.15, or 7.3 percent, to \$178.36, while Chipotle gained \$52.75, or 7.8 percent, to \$725.82.

Investors have their eye on company earnings and outlooks to get a sense of how the economy is doing. Of the roughly 104 companies that have reported so far, about 70 percent of them delivered results that beat Wall Street estimates, according to S&P Capital IQ.

McDonald's and Caterpillar are among the other big-name companies reporting earnings on Thursday.

In a light week of economic news, the market got encouraging data on the housing market. □



Customers and staff stand in the entrance to an Apple store in New York's Grand Central Terminal. Apple Inc. reported disappointing quarterly financial results on Tuesday, July 21, 2015, leading US stocks lower on Wednesday, July 22, 2015. (AP Photo/Mark Lennihan)

up 9.2 percent, while the S&P 500 is up 2.7 percent and the Dow is essentially flat.

Five of the 10 sectors in the S&P 500 index declined, led by a 1.6 percent drop in technology stocks. Financials led the gainers, rising 0.7 percent.

million loss driven by soaring commissions paid to its partners and flat sales. The stock slipped 49 cents, or 1.2 percent, to \$39.24.

Microsoft's slide was more pronounced at 3.7 percent. The company reported a hefty quarterly loss stemming from an ex-

Military fuel tanker delays pull down Boeing's 2Q earnings

SCOTT MAYEROWITZ

AP Airlines Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Aerospace giant Boeing Co. saw its earnings plunge by a third in the second quarter because of repeated delays with a military fuel tanker.

The Chicago-based company on Wednesday posted a \$1.11 billion net profit, down from \$1.65 billion during the same period last year.

The bulk of that drop is attributed to a \$536 million

after-tax charge Boeing took on the Air Force's KC-46 Pegasus Tanker, a midair refueling plane Boeing is building off its commercial 767 jet frame. The company said it has faced higher engineering and manufacturing costs to complete certification and initial production of the military aircraft.

"While last week's tanker charge announcement was disappointing, we realize that unexpected issues can arise during the design

and development of large, complicated products," said Edward Jones analyst Jeff Windau. "The key issue is that the delivery schedule be maintained."

To date, Boeing has booked \$1.26 billion in charges related to the tanker project, according to Wolfe Research.

The airplane builder posted revenue of \$24.54 billion in the period, up 11 percent from the same period last year. The profit worked out to \$1.59 a share, down

from \$2.24 during the same period last year.

That increased revenue mostly came from faster production of its commercial planes. Boeing takes a deposit when a jet order is made but doesn't collect the bulk of the cash until a jet is delivered. The company delivered 197 commercial jets during the quarter, up from 181 during the same period last year.

"Record commercial airplane deliveries to customers worldwide drove solid

revenue growth," the company's new CEO, Dennis Muilenburg said in a statement.

Tuesday night, right before Wednesday's earnings release, Boeing did announce some good news: FedEx is ordering 50 new 767 cargo freighters with the option to purchase more.

The 767 is nearing the end of its production cycle, replaced by the more fuel-efficient 787, also known as the Dreamliner.

Coca-Cola fetching higher prices with marketing, mini-cans



Bottles of Coca-Cola are on display at a Haverhill, Mass. supermarket. Coca-Cola reported quarterly financial results on Wednesday, July 22, 2015. (AP Photo/Elise Amendola)

CANDICE CHOI

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Coca-Cola says people are shelling out more money for its drinks, thanks to a mix of re-invigorated marketing and mini-cans and glass bottles that tend to cost more. To help boost weak sales growth, the maker of Sprite, Fanta and Powerade has

been slashing costs, then pouring some of that money into increased marketing.

The Atlanta-based company, known for more than a century's worth of ads such as "I'd Like to Buy the World a Coke," says the stepped-up quality and quantity of its advertising is helping it command higher

prices for its drinks.

In a conference call with analysts Wednesday, Coca-Cola CEO Muhtar Kent said the company's revenue growth in North America during the second quarter would not have been achieved without the "infusion" of improved marketing.

Without providing specif-

ics, the company said overall advertising spending saw a double-digit percentage increase during the quarter.

In the U.S., a recent campaign is the "Share A Coke" program, which puts popular names and words like "Friend" and "Legend" on packages. Many customers snap pictures of the cans and bottles, then post them on social media sites like Facebook and Instagram. The increased focus on marketing comes as Coca-Cola faces broader challenges in the U.S., with beverage options proliferating and people continuing to move away from traditional sodas.

That has prompted the company to focus on extracting more money per transaction by raising prices on traditional packages, as well as by pushing offerings like mini-cans that cost more. During the quarter, the company said the sales volume of mini-cans rose double-digits.

Sandy Douglas, president of Coca-Cola North Amer-

ica, noted that moms in particular like the smaller sizes and that people are willing to pay "a little bit more money" for them.

In the past, Douglas noted that the company marketed packages that were too big and led to waste. He said a variety of smaller sizes now account for roughly in the "low teens" as a percent of sales volume in North America.

Other food and beverage companies have pushed up revenue with similar strategies. Earlier this month, for instance, PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi said the company is using "creative revenue management tactics, coupled with innovation" to boost its financial performance.

That could mean newer products that cost a bit more, like Mountain Dew Dewshine that come in a glass bottle.

And in April, Starbucks said it boosted sales in the U.S. with the help of pricier drinks like the "Flat White" espresso and Teavana "Shaken" ice teas. □

Microsoft books \$8.4 billion write-down on phones in 4Q

RYAN NAKASHIMA

AP Business Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Microsoft booked an \$8.4 billion charge in the fourth quarter, swallowing a bitter pill by writing off the Nokia phone business it bought just over a year ago. It narrowly beat analysts' depressed expectations for a quarter that also saw a steep decline in personal computer sales even as it prepares to launch its latest operating system, Windows 10.

The Redmond, Washington-based software giant posted a net loss of \$3.20 billion, or 40 cents per share, reversing a profit of \$4.61 billion, or 55 cents per share, a year ago.

Adjusted to exclude the charges, the company posted a quarterly profit of 62 cents per share, beating the average estimate of 15 analysts surveyed by Zacks Investment Research of 31 cents per share.

The write-down was expected after CEO Satya Nadella announced 7,800 job cuts two weeks ago. The company will continue to make phones on a smaller scale, paring down its lower-cost offerings.

Nadella told analysts on a conference call he'd like Windows phones to be more targeted at high-end businesses and their employees, much like its Surface tablet, which saw upbeat sales.

"We have a formula there that I would like to apply more broadly," Nadella said.

The difficult quarter comes ahead of the launch of Windows 10 on July 29, a free upgrade for users of Windows 7 or 8 for the next year. The company hopes that better integrating its store into the revamped Start button and powering more Internet searches through Bing will compensate for the temporary dip

in Windows revenue.

Microsoft plans for Windows 10 to be its last version of Windows before transitioning the business to a fee-for-service model down the road, although how that will work is unclear.

The company gave an outlook for revenue of \$20.7 billion to \$21.3 billion for the first fiscal quarter through September that was below the \$22.6 billion expected by analysts polled by FactSet. Shares dipped \$1.90, or 4 percent, to \$45.38 in after-hours trading.

Daniel Ives, senior analyst with FBR Capital Markets, said the company is likely under-promising in the hope it can over-deliver, but investors are cautious about the launch of Windows 10.

"The Street continues to be wary of what Windows 10 can bring in terms of a growth profile back to the Microsoft story," Ives said. "It's a transitional quarter

going into a transitional year."

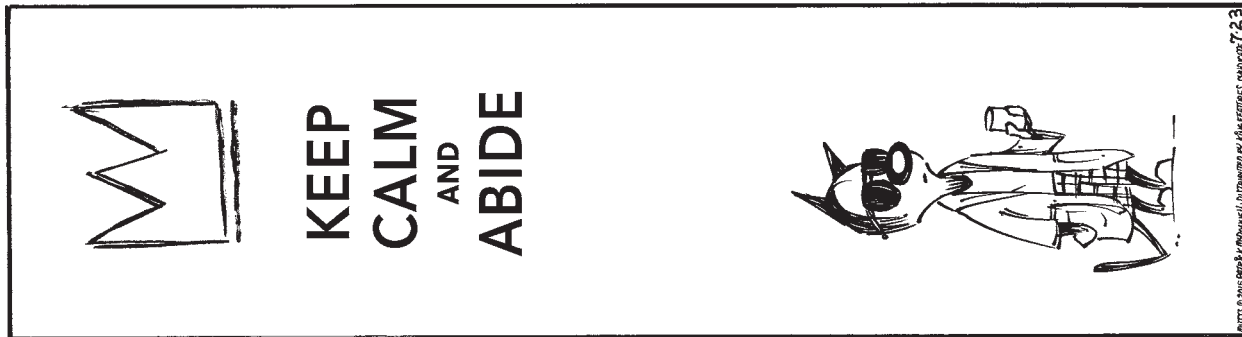
In the quarter through June, Windows revenue fell

22 percent, hurt by a decline in PC shipments that researchers at IDC pegged at 11.8 percent globally. □

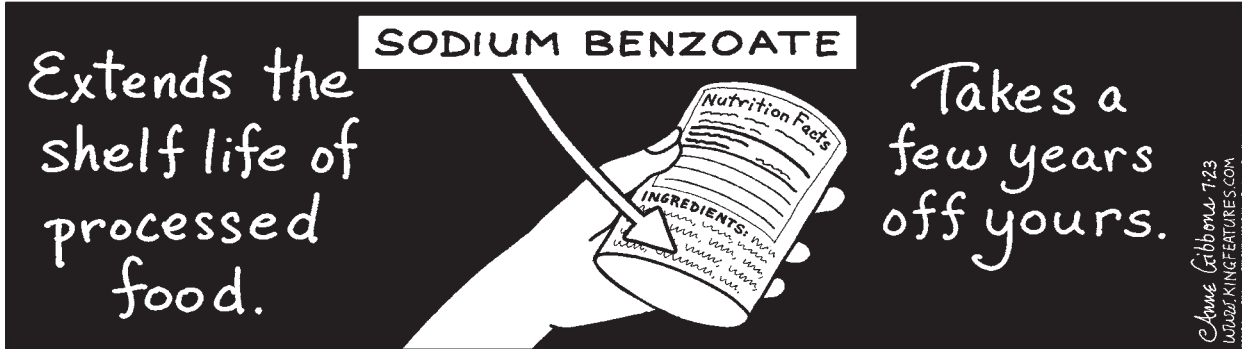
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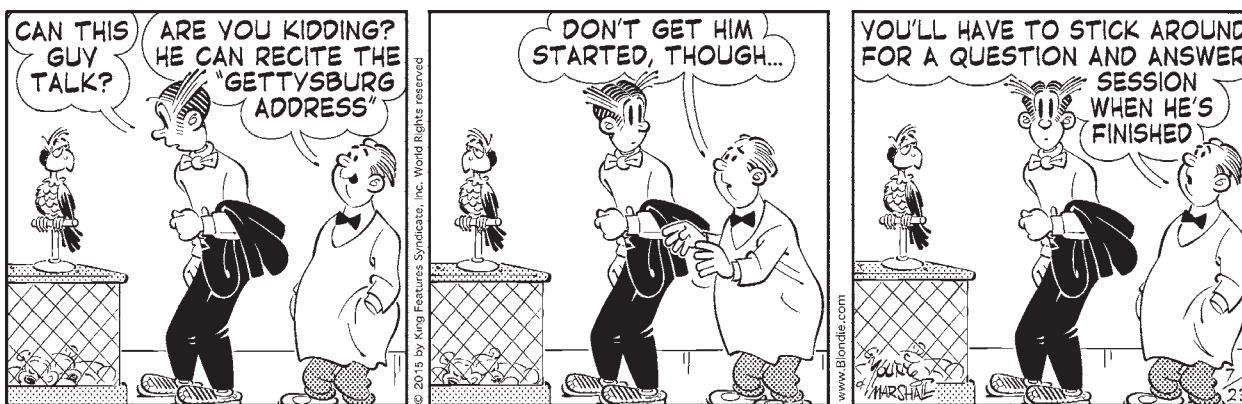
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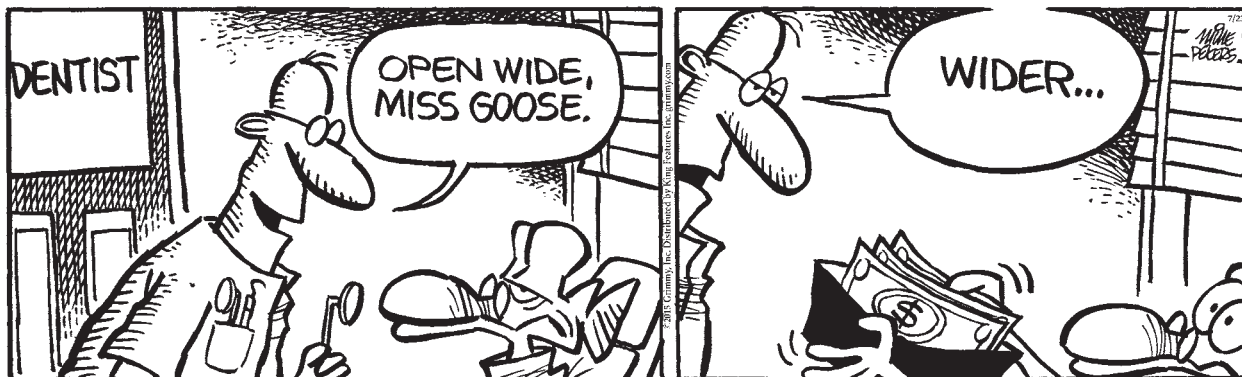
6 Chix



Blondie



Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

1			4	5	8			3
7								9
		5				1		
	3						9	
			6		4			
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8								4
2			5	8	3			1

Difficulty Level ★★★

7/23

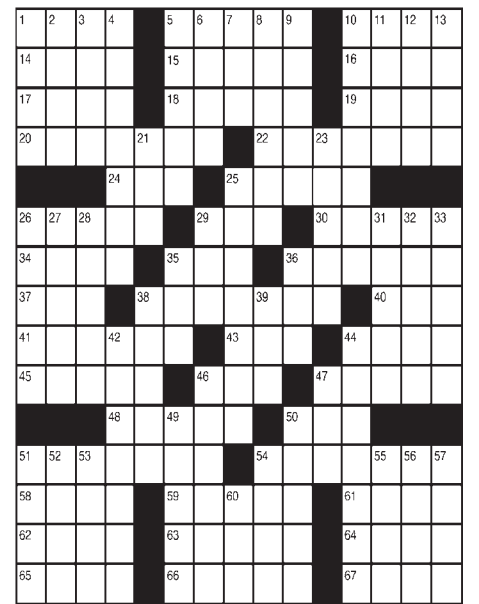
Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

8	9	1	6	5	7	2	4	3
2	3	6	8	9	4	5	7	1
5	7	4	1	2	3	8	6	9
6	2	9	4	8	5	1	3	7
7	1	8	3	6	9	4	2	5
4	5	3	7	1	2	6	9	8
3	4	5	2	7	8	9	1	6
9	6	2	5	3	1	7	8	4
1	8	7	9	4	6	3	5	2

ACROSS

- 1 Basics
- 5 Greek letter
- 10 "___ well that ends well"
- 14 "Phooey!"
- 15 Chicago team
- 16 Pillage; plunder
- 17 Facts & figures
- 18 Radiant
- 19 Pond growth
- 20 Respiratory & circulatory
- 22 Chatterbox
- 24 Ms. Thurman
- 25 Excessive enthusiasm
- 26 Farewell
- 29 Have a bug
- 30 Grin
- 34 Forbids
- 35 Pack animal
- 36 One who puts cargo on a ship
- 37 Mistaken
- 38 Cruel
- 40 In the past
- 41 "Alice ___ Live Here Anymore"
- 43 Cry
- 44 Actor Everett
- 45 Uncanny
- 46 Shortest month: abbr.
- 47 Entire
- 48 Drive too fast
- 50 Actress Arthur
- 51 Metal pail used to carry coal
- 54 Capital of Thailand
- 58 Jab
- 59 Receded
- 61 City in Nevada
- 62 ___ and above; beyond
- 63 Sound of a bell
- 64 Look ___; investigate
- 65 Actress Harper
- 66 Rudely brief
- 67 Wall recess



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

7/23/15

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

C	H	I	M	P	B	A	A	S	S	H	U	N
H	O	T	E	L	L	U	A	U	K	E	N	O
A	S	I	D	E	A	S	A	N	I	N	F	O
R	E	S	I	D	E	N	T	D	E	N	N	I
					A	G	E	D	M	A	N	D
C	O	R	N	E	R	S	U	E	D	E		
U	N	O	S	I	N	U	S	S	E	A	M	S
S	T	A	R	E	A	G	E	R	P	L	O	W
P	O	R	E	S	V	A	S	E	S	S	P	A
					C	O	W	E	R	A	L	M
F	E	D	E	R	A	L	T	R	I	O		
E	R	A	S	E	R	C	A	M	P	B	E	L
A	N	N	S	B	L	A	B	P	I	X	I	E
S	I	Z	E	L	I	M	B	E	L	E	C	T
T	E	A	S	E	S	P	E	S	D	E	S	K

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7/23/15

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| 38 Bumbling | 51 Espy; notice |
| 39 Unruly crowd | 52 Sheltered bay |
| 42 Nuns | 53 Instruments at |
| 44 Uneasy feeling; embarrassment | 54 Uncle ___ rice |
| 46 Weak | 55 Casino game |
| 47 TV's Ming-Na | 56 Hang ___; keep |
| 49 Chosen few | 57 Nut |
| 50 Scout's award | 60 Tavern |

Shell gets permits for limited oil drilling in Arctic waters

KEVIN FREKING
DAN JOLING
Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — The Obama administration has given Royal Dutch Shell PLC approval to begin limited exploratory oil drilling off Alaska's north-west coast.

The two permits issued Wednesday clear the way for drilling in Chukchi Sea but with conditions.

Shell can only drill the top sections of wells because the company doesn't have on site the critical emergency response equipment to cap the well in case of a leak. That equipment is aboard a ship headed to Portland, Oregon, for repairs.

The Interior Department's Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement said in a statement that Shell could submit an amended application for deeper drilling when the capping stack can be deployed within 24 hours.

"Without question, activities conducted offshore Alaska must be held to the highest safety, environmental protection and emergency response standards," said the bureau's director, Brian Salerno.

The department had given a conditional OK in May to Shell's drilling plan, pending the company's ability to obtain all necessary permits from state and federal agencies.

Some environmental groups worry the Arctic's remoteness and rugged conditions will hamper cleanup efforts in the event of a spill, risking devastation of a fragile ecosystem. Cindy Shogan, executive director of the Alaska Wilderness League, called it the wrong choice.

"This decision puts the fate of the fragile Arctic Ocean, and our climate future, in the hands of Shell Oil," she said in a statement.

Shell spokeswoman Kelly op de Weegh said by email that receipt of the drilling permits signals the end of the permitting process, and drilling will begin when the area is clear of sea ice.

"We remain committed to operating in a safe, environmentally responsible manner and look forward to evaluating what could potentially become a national energy resource base," she said.

Proponents say drilling can be conducted safely with existing technologies and that future production decades from now will help sustain the country's energy needs and limit reliance on imports.

Shell and other companies hope to tap into one of the country's last great petroleum reserves. The U.S. Geological Survey estimates the Arctic offshore reserves in the Chukchi and Beaufort seas at 26 billion barrels of recoverable oil.

Arctic offshore drilling is strongly supported by elected officials in Alaska, where upward of 90 percent of state government is funded by the oil industry. □

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Summit to weigh endangered red wolf's plight as numbers drop

By **JIM SALTER**
Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) -- Wolf experts from around the nation will be gathering this week to consider how to help the critically endangered red wolf. The red wolf population in the wild, all in eastern North Carolina, has dropped to

about 50 from 100 in the past five years, officials at the St. Louis Endangered Wolf Center said Tuesday. The matter took on more urgency recently when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service suspended the reintroduction of captive wolves into the wild until it could study the value of the release

Study: DNA reveals new wrinkle about settlement of Americas

MALCOLM RITTER
AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Scientists have discovered a previously unknown source of ancestry for some native peoples in Brazil, suggesting a new wrinkle in the story of the settlement of the Americas. The finding does not change the broad outlines of what scientists believe: that the Americas were settled by people who crossed a now-submerged land bridge from Siberia to North America more than 15,000 years ago. Then they made their way south, and their DNA has been found in native peoples. This founder population drew its heritage from Siberia and people related to modern East Asians. Now, DNA from modern-day people indicates that another population also crossed the land bridge and contributed to the heritage of some modern-day natives of Amazonian Brazil, researchers say. This second group, dubbed "Population Y," had its roots in an Asian population that no longer exists, but which also left a genetic fingerprint in modern native peoples of Australia and New Guinea, said David Reich

of Harvard Medical School. He reported the work with colleagues in a paper released Tuesday by the journal *Nature*. Population Y provided only a fraction of the DNA now found in the Amazonian peoples. It's not clear when they left the land bridge, in comparison to the previously recognized immigrants, Reich said. But they clearly arrived in Amazonia long ago and it should be considered a second founder group, he said. The paper provides the first robust evidence that some native populations of the Americas trace part of their ancestry to a second source, said Deborah Bolnick of the University of Texas at Austin, who was not involved in the work. It suggests that the history of the native populations "is more complicated than previously thought," she said. A second study, released Tuesday by the journal *Science*, detected a similar signal in an Amazonian native group, as well as Aleutian Islanders. But the researchers concluded the DNA showed up relatively recently, after the initial peopling of the Americas. □



This September 2014 photo provided by the Endangered Wolf Center shows two red wolves at the center in Eureka, Mo.

Associated Press

program. Experts meeting Wednesday through Friday in suburban St. Louis will make breeding and relocation recommendations, discuss population viability and hear from government officials involved with the reintroduction program. Red wolves once roamed much of the eastern third of the U.S., from the Ohio River Valley into Missouri and as far south as Texas and Florida. The red wolf was designated as endangered in 1967, and the Fish and Wildlife Service began efforts to save the species. Major threats to red wolves are hunters who mistake them for coyotes, and the belief they are dangerous and aggressive toward humans, said Virginia Busch, executive director of the Endangered Wolf Center. "Educating the public and dispelling misconceptions

about 'the big bad wolf' is vital if we are to ensure their long term viability," Busch said. The red wolf was declared extinct in the wild in 1980, when only 14 pure red wolves remained to begin breeding programs, said Busch. Four pairs of red wolves were released into North Carolina's Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge in 1987, and remains the only place in the world where red wolves exist in the wild. Cindy Dohner, southeast regional director for the Fish and Wildlife Service, said in June that suspending reintroduction is part of "our commitment to get the science right, rebuild trust with our neighbors in those communities, our state partners and many stakeholders as we address issues regarding the overall recovery of the red wolf."

The Fish and Wildlife Service said nearly 200 red wolves exist in captive breeding facilities. That includes four at the Endangered Wolf Center. Busch said about 30 members of the Red Wolf Species Survival Plan will attend the conference. They represent zoos, research centers and other agencies from around the country. "It is incumbent on us both to continue our efforts to sustain the population, as well as ramp up education and public understanding about the need to save these amazing animals," she said in a statement. The Endangered Wolf Center is a nonprofit founded in 1971 by zoologist Marlin Perkins, a St. Louis native best known as the host of TV's "Mutual of Omaha Wild Kingdom," who died in 1986. □

Jake Gyllenhaal and Antoine Fuqua sculpt a boxing great

LINDSEY BAHR

AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Director Antoine Fuqua got a distressing call early in pre-production for the boxing drama "Southpaw."

It was Terry Claybon, a boxing expert who's trained Fuqua for years. He'd just met with Jake Gyllenhaal to see if the actor could fight and he didn't have good news.

In "Southpaw," out Friday, Gyllenhaal needed to play a light heavyweight boxing champ, Billy "The Great" Hope.

"He said, 'He's the wrong guy, you picked the wrong guy,'" said Fuqua.

Gyllenhaal could hardly be blamed. He'd never boxed and Fuqua was looking for something specific.

As a lifetime boxing student and devotee, the "Training Day" director wanted realism in his movie. He'd never directed a film about the sport he loved so dearly and he really didn't want to make just another boxing movie.

Between "Rocky" and "Raging Bull" and a number of lesser imitators, the cinema is a not so secret



In this Sunday, July 12, 2015 photo, Antoine Fuqua, left, and Jake Gyllenhaal, pose for a portrait in promotion of their new film "Southpaw," at the Four Seasons Hotel in Los Angeles. The movie releases in the U.S. on July 24, 2015.

Associated Press

fan of the drama and metaphors inherent in the brutal sport.

"I thought, 'I need a guy who will give me his heart, train seven days a week, twice a day and eat, sleep, drink and live like a fighter,'" he said. And his trusted trainer had just told him Gyllenhaal wasn't it.

"Sons of Anarchy" creator Kurt Sutter had written the script about this champ's fall from grace and strug-

gle to get his daughter back for rapper Eminem. And Gyllenhaal wasn't the only name tossed around when Eminem dropped out.

Yet the possibility lingered. Not only did Fuqua think that Gyllenhaal had the physical size and expressive eyes to make this fairly unlikable guy lovable, Harvey Weinstein was also keen on him.

Gyllenhaal was prepared

for the challenge. The now 34-year-old actor had just shed 30 pounds to play a creepy freelance videographer in "Nightcrawler" and he didn't hesitate to throw himself into the ring. Two weeks after that initial call, Claybon had a much altered message.

"He said, 'you were right. This guy's got heart. He's tough,'" recalls Fuqua.

So they started building Billy Hope together. Literally.

Fuqua and Gyllenhaal trained side-by-side twice a day, (nearly) every day for months with Claybon. They did it all: the tires, the sparring, the sprints, the long runs and the sit-ups. Fuqua eventually scaled back to once a day, while Gyllenhaal soldiered on.

It didn't ease up on set, either. Fuqua filmed the three-minute rounds straight through, often opting for six-minute takes without the help of body doubles. He and cinematographer Mauro Fiore even enlisted HBO Boxing veterans Todd Palladino and Rick Cypher to shoot the fights.

"We shot it like we would shoot a real fight. We did real rounds. We didn't even stop to light it. When he was exhausted, when his lungs were hurting, when he was spitting blood? That was real," said Fuqua.

Gyllenhaal was devoted to getting it right.

"There're a couple shots where he really got hit in the ribs," said Fuqua. "I would go out to stop it and he would wave me off. He wanted to keep going." □

Cheadle's Miles Davis biopic to premiere at NYFF

NEW YORK (AP) — Don Cheadle's Miles Davis biopic, "Miles Ahead," will make its world premiere as the closing night film at the New York Film Festival.

The Film Society of Lincoln Center announced the selection Wednesday. The film has been a long-time passion project for Cheadle, who stars as the jazz musician and directs for the first time.

"Miles Ahead" concentrates on Davis' reemergence in 1980 after his so-called "silent period" in the late 1970s. The film does not yet have distribution in North America.

The 53rd New York Film Festival runs September 25



In this April 13, 2015 file photo, Don Cheadle arrives at the Los Angeles premiere of "Avengers: Age Of Ultron."

Associated Press

through October 11. Previously announced as the opening night film is Robert Zemeckis' "The Walk." □

LeBron James' company scores Warner Bros. TV, movie deal

LOS ANGELES (AP) — LeBron James is setting his sights beyond the basketball court.

The NBA star and his company, SpringHill Entertainment, have signed a content creation deal with Warner Bros. that includes potential projects in film, television and other digital properties.

Warner Bros. Chairman and CEO Kevin Tsujihara announced the partnership Wednesday.

James says connecting with his fans and "telling meaningful stories" have always been his passion. He's the executive producer of the Starz show "Survivor's Remorse," and also referenced his video project "Uninterrupted" as examples.



In this Wed., July 15, 2015 file photo, NBA player LeBron James, of the Cleveland Cavaliers, accepts the award for best championship performance at the ESPY Awards at the Microsoft Theater, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

SpringHill Entertainment CEO Maverick Carter added that he wants the company to be a "leader in the original content-creating space."

Beyond his basketball and producing career, James also recently appeared as himself in the Judd Apatow/Amy Schumer comedy "Trainwreck." □

Madonna feels like Picasso, says art has no expiration date

MESFIN FEKADU
AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Madonna thinks artists deep into their careers should stop if they don't have anything more to say. But at 56, the singer says she still has things to talk about, and in short, she feels like Pablo Picasso.

"I like to compare myself to other kinds of artists like Picasso. He kept painting and painting until the day he died. Why? Because I guess he felt inspired to do so," she said. "Life inspired him, so he had to keep expressing himself, and that's how I feel."

Madonna released her self-titled debut album in 1983, and her latest album, "Rebel Heart," earlier this year. She said the key to sticking around is her continual desire to inspire others.

"I don't think there's a time, a date, an expiration date for being creative," she said. "I think you go until you don't have any more to say."

The pop icon will launch her Rebel Heart Tour on Sept. 9 in Montreal. The tour includes more than 60



In this Feb. 8, 2015 file photo, Madonna arrives at the 57th annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles. Associated Press

shows across North America, Europe, Australia and Asia. "The theme I really truly explore in this show more than anything is love and romance," she said in a phone interview from her home in New York City last week. "I want people to walk out like they're feeling inspired and like they've seen something they've never seen before (and) felt something they've never felt before."

Comedian Amy Schumer, whose new movie "Trainwreck" opened impressively at No. 2 with \$30.2

million last weekend, will open for three Madonna shows in New York.

"She's a role model for women, and I am too, and I think it's a good match," said Madonna, who added that the idea to bring Schumer on board came from the singer's management team. "I love her and ... I just thought, 'That's interesting.' (I'll) try something new and different rather than the usual run-of-the-mill — have a band, have a DJ. It's definitely a new thing. I hope it works — fingers crossed." □

Sebastian Junger writing book on troops returning home



In this Jan. 20, 2013 file photo, director Sebastian Junger from the film "Which Way Is Front Line From Here" poses for a portrait during the 2013 Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah. Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Sebastian Junger's next book will continue his reporting on veterans, this time on what happens when they return home.

Hachette Book Group imprint Twelve told The Associated Press on Wednesday that its plans a May 2016 release for Junger's "Tribe." The book is a sequel to "War," which drew upon his time with U.S. troops stationed in Afghanistan in 2007-2008.

"Tribe" will focus on stresses that veterans face after completing their service. According to Twelve, Junger will note the "irony" of some veterans missing war and that many aspects of PTSD have only appeared in recent decades. Best known for "The Perfect Storm," Junger will combine history, psychology and anthropology as he probes the "alienating effects of modern society." □

Chris Brown's Manila departure delayed over fraud allegation



In this June 28, 2015 file photo, Chris Brown arrives at the BET Awards at the Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Grammy award-winning singer Chris Brown's departure from Manila was delayed Wednesday because of fraud allegations against him and his promoter for a canceled concert last New Year's Eve in

the Philippines.

The recording artist, who performed at a packed concert Tuesday night in Manila, was prevented from leaving on a private plane Wednesday pending clearance by the Bureau of Immigration.

"It was a misunderstanding that has since been cleared up," said a spokeswoman for Brown, Nicole Perna. "Chris leaves tomorrow for Hong Kong to continue his planned performances."

The religious group that owns the New Year's Eve concert venue petitioned the Philippines Department of Justice for help prosecuting Brown. It wasn't immediately clear whether a formal complaint was filed. Philippines Bureau of Immigration spokeswoman Elaine Tan said Brown and his promoter, John Michael Pio Roda, were placed on the bureau's "lookout bulletin" on the instruction of the Department of Justice. Tan said a lookout bulletin is not on its own a bar to departure, unlike a hold

departure order.

She said the Justice Department order directs the bureau to "take prudent steps to verify on the status of the criminal case against the subjects."

"If the concerned agency raises no objection to the departure, then we will allow the subject to leave," Tan said.

The singer canceled a New Year's Eve concert at the 55,000-seat Philippine Arena at the last minute, reportedly because he lost his passport the day before the scheduled event.

The legal counsel of the religious group Iglesia ni Cristo and its Maligaya Development Corporation which manages the Philippine Arena, wrote Tuesday to Justice Secretary Leila de Lima to ask for

assistance in prosecuting the criminal complaint for fraud that the MDC is filing against Brown and Pio Roda.

The letter said after making representations that Brown would perform at the concert, and after having fully paid for the two men's services, Brown failed to appear and perform at the concert, to the damage and prejudice of MDC.

Brown had a concert scheduled for Wednesday night in Hong Kong, but calls to the venue were not answered. A posting earlier Wednesday on the singer's Twitter account said a concert later this week in Jakarta, Indonesia, was being canceled for unspecified safety concerns but would be rescheduled. □

Khloe Kardashian to host 'hybrid' talk show on FYI channel



In this Nov. 23, 2014 file photo, Khloe Kardashian arrives at the 42nd annual American Music Awards in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Kardashian TV footprint is expanding yet again. The FYI channel says Khloe Kardashian will host and produce a "hybrid" talk series titled "Kocktails With Khloe."

Kardashian will be joined in the kitchen and at the dinner table by celebrity guests and friends for conversation, cooking and

party games, FYI said Tuesday.

She's been part of her family's TV empire in shows including "Keeping up With the Kardashians" and "Khloe and Lamar," which featured NBA player Lamar Odom. Odom and Kardashian were married, but she filed for divorce in 2013. "Kocktails With Khloe" is set to debut in late 2015. □

HBO signs ex-ESPN personality Bill Simmons to deal

NEW YORK (AP) — HBO says it has struck a multi-year, multi-platform deal with the multi-faceted Bill Simmons.

Under the deal, which begins in October, HBO will be Simmons' exclusive television home, the network said Wednesday.

Among other projects, Simmons will host a weekly talk show premiering next year. It will feature stories and guests from across the sports and cultural landscapes.

He will also have a production deal to produce content for the network and its digital platforms, delivering video podcasts and features. In addition, he will consult with HBO Sports.

A top personality at ESPN



In this May 6, 2014 file photo, Bill Simmons arrives at the world premiere of "Million Dollar Arm" at El Capitan Theatre in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

until they parted ways in May, Simmons has served as a sports columnist, TV host and analyst, and best-selling author. He was also the founding editor of the Grantland.com website. □



This 2015 image provided by courtesy of E! shows Caitlyn Jenner in the first official promotional trailer for the new documentary series, "I Am Cait," in Southern California. Associated Press

'I Am Cait' debuts as a docuseries with a broader purpose

FRAZIER MOORE

AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — It's the next step in the biggest celebrity story of the year.

It's the long-awaited debut of Caitlyn Jenner's docuseries charting her new life as a transgender woman.

Fittingly, "I Am Cait" (premiering Sunday at 8 p.m. EDT on E!) opens with the former Bruce Jenner, her ample tresses in huge rollers, at home getting hair-and-makeup treatment as she beholds a giant blow-up of her bombshell Vanity Fair cover that followed her April interview with Diane Sawyer.

Yes, Jenner's transition from Bruce to Caitlyn has been a highly orchestrated spectacle, with "I Am Cait" the latest phase of the campaign. And, typical of celeb-reality shows, there isn't a scene in this first of eight episodes that doesn't seem stage-managed to push the starry uber-narrative along.

Even so, there is something more substantial going on here. A gratifying measure of authenticity manages to bypass the celebrity trap-pings.

Jenner's mother and two sisters help. Delivered to Jenner's seaside California compound for their first encounter with her as a woman, they seem refreshingly like regular folks who are genuinely focused on a family member they love

and support, never mind all the lights and cameras there to capture every moment.

"It's going to be so difficult for me to think of you as 'she,' and say 'Caitlyn' when I want to speak with you," her mother says. "It's going to take some getting used to, but I want to do what you want."

At the other end of the authenticity scale are step-daughter Kim Kardashian and her husband, Kanye West. They are seen in a cameo appearance that plays as unintended comic relief, with Kardashian never doffing her floor-length coat (she blames her modesty on her pregnancy, yet it smacks more of, "I don't show my body except for my own projects") and with West explaining that his shoelaces are untied because they're unnecessary since his shoes are really slippers ("the laces are sort of after the fact").

Kardashian takes the time to survey Jenner's closet full of new women's fashions. Then she and West make their hasty exit.

Such interludes undercut the dignity of Jenner's challenges, and make what she is going through arguably less relatable to an audience that needs to relate.

On the other hand, fame claims attention, and the celebrity machine for Caitlyn Jenner, including "I Am

Cait," has been impossible to miss. With "Cait," she will have a weekly pulpit and a guaranteed flock to whom she knows how to deliver her message loud and clear.

"The tremendous amount of support that I've gotten has been overwhelming, but you also have to realize that it's not this way for everybody," she takes pains to point out.

More than once, she cites the lack of support from family, friends and outsiders experienced by far too many in the trans community, as well as the high murder rate and many suicides.

Jenner says she relates: "I've had some very dark moments in my life. I have been in my house with a gun and said, 'Let's just end it right here.'"

"People are dying over this issue," she says. "I feel a tremendous responsibility here, because I have a voice, and there are so many trans people out there who do not have a voice."

At the hour's end, Jenner heads to San Diego (switching cars twice to lose pursuing paparazzi) to meet with the mother of Tyler Prescott, a transgender teen who took his own life in May. "Even with the full support of the family, it's still a hard journey," Tyler's mother says of transgender youngsters. □

The Parent-Kid Pot Talk From Inside the Industry

LEANNE ITALIE

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Soon after Colorado legalized recreational cannabis, Todd Mitchem's son proposed using the plant for a horticulture project at his Montessori school in Denver.

School officials said no way, despite support from dad, a regular weed user and chief executive of a dating app and social network for fellow enthusiasts.

"They didn't want to touch it. They weren't ready to touch it," said Mitchem, who is divorced and shares custody of his kids, ages 11, 9 and 7.

That was early 2013. Now, pot is everywhere in the state, along with three others and the District of Columbia that pushed beyond sanctioned medicinal use to legal consumption just because.

Mitchem, 44, has been speaking openly to his kids about cannabis since he first entered the industry a couple of years ago. He co-founded the app High There! in addition to running it.

So how has legal weed changed the parenting pot conversation for him and others raising kids while working in the fast-growing business segment?

"My kids know everything," he said. "My 11-year-old son is the playground educator. They know probably more about cannabis than most grown-ups who are not in the space. We talk about the facts. We talk about the science."

Mitchem doesn't fire up around his kids, but he has partaken of small amounts in edibles "when we're all hanging out together, watching a movie or something like that."

He added: "They're very aware of the cannabis brownies that are in the refrigerator that they're not allowed to touch."

It's also not OK for them to try pot in any other form. Not only is it illegal since they're under 21, but it's bad for their developing brains, dad said.

The pot conversation can be trickier for industry folks



This photo shows Todd Mitchem at his home near Denver. Mitchem is a cannabis consumer and CEO of an app-based social network for cannabis enthusiasts, High There! He's also the single dad of three kids ages 11, 9 and 7. Mitchem says legal recreational marijuana has changed the pot conversation for him and other parents.

like him, but he said all parents trying to find their way through the talk amid rapid acceptance of legal marijuana can benefit from some basic research before spouting: "Because it's bad, Johnny."

Has Mitchem's work and pot use changed the way he is perceived among other parents?

"As a cannabis business person I've been all over the news, so the parents of my kids' friends know me," he said. "Some kids' parents won't let their kids hang out at my house. They don't say why. Other parents are fascinated by it."

Cassandra Farrington, 43, is co-founder and chief executive of Marijuana Business Daily, a Denver-based industry publishing and conference planning company. She's also a Girl Scout troop leader and mom to a

10-year-old girl and 8-year-old boy.

Farrington and her husband do not use cannabis, but she acknowledged her timeline for talking to her kids about it was likely accelerated by her work. In Colorado, where pot shops are plentiful, not having the pot conversation isn't an option.

"It comes up on the evening news. You drive down the street and you're passing a dispensary and there's a funny smell," she said.

Farrington's company held its first national cannabis conference in Denver soon after the state constitution was amended in 2012 to allow for adult recreational consumption. It was a high-profile affair.

"That's when I basically got 'outed' within my local social community. Some parents in my Girl Scout troop

were like, 'Wait a minute, I know her,' and that sort of thing," she said. "Now it's absolutely fine."

In addition to Colorado and the District of Columbia, Washington state, Oregon and Alaska have legalized marijuana for recreational use. A number of states have also decriminalized the possession of small amounts of pot and passed medical marijuana laws.

Brittany Driver, 30, owns a cannabis public relations agency in Denver, writes frequently about the industry and is co-chairman of a chapter of Women Grow, which supports women in the business. She is a user of medical marijuana to stimulate her appetite, and she has a 3-year-old son.

"Even with legal marijuana, there was still a lot of trepidation," she said. "Is a neighbor going to re-

port me because they see I have a child? But over the past year, things in Colorado have calmed down quite a bit as far as that goes. Outside of Colorado, there are still big problems going on with parents and just being able to use it as medicine and have a child."

Bruce Barcott, 49, is a pot user for both medical and recreational purposes. He lives outside Seattle and consumes about once a month, but never around his kids, a 13-year-old son and a 16-year-old daughter. He's also the author of a new book on the future of legal marijuana in America, "Weed the People."

"I had real qualms as a parent writing this book," he said. "I mean, here I am writing a book about pot and I've got two young teenagers in my house."

His pot conversation has been a running dialogue, he said.

"We would stop and start in little snippets, maybe on the drive to school or over dinner. My daughter, especially, thought it was hilarious that her father was writing a book about pot. It's an interesting opener,"

Barcott said. "I wanted to really talk with them about marijuana in a way that came from a place of honesty and factual data and truth and not have to resort to some sort of scare tactic to keep them off pot."

Pretending, in a legal or illegal state, that teens aren't going to encounter marijuana is not realistic, Barcott said.

"I told my daughter, 'Look, it's hard enough to maintain a good GPA as it is. Imagine trying to do that when you're drunk three nights a week or if you're using pot,'" he said.

Barcott remembers the time he brought home a small cannabis plant to photograph and study for his book. It did not go unnoticed by his kids.

"They were, like, 'Is that a pot plant?' We had a great conversation," he said. "We said, 'Look, this is a marijuana plant. It's been demonized for 75 years.□"